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# **THE HAPPY AVERAGE**





# THE HAPPY AVERAGE

*By*

**BRAND ~~WHITLOCK~~**

Author of "The 13th District"

"Her Infinite Variety"

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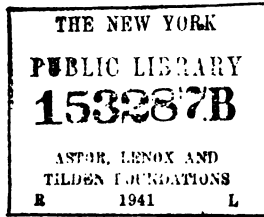
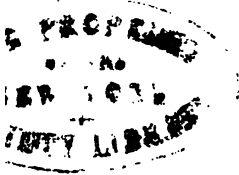
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A

TO  
ELIAS D. WHITLOCK



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# **THE HAPPY AVERAGE**





# THE HAPPY AVERAGE

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## CHAPTER I

### A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY

"Come on, old man."

Lawrence led the way with a jaunty step that was intended to show his easy footing with the Carters. But Marley lagged behind. Even if calling on girls had not been such a serious business with him, he could not forget that he was just graduated from college and that a certain dignity befitted him. He wished Lawrence would not speak so loud; the girls might hear, and think he was afraid; he wished to keep the truth from them as long as possible. He had already caught a glimpse of the girls, or thought he had, but before he could make sure, the vague white figures on the veranda

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

stirred; he heard a scurrying, and the loose bang of a screen door. Then it was still. Lawrence laughed—somehow, as Marley felt, derisively.

The way from the sidewalk up to the Carters' veranda was not long, of course, though it seemed long to Marley, and Marley's deliberation made it seem long to Lawrence. They paused at the steps of the veranda, and Lawrence made a low bow.

"Good evening, Mrs. Carter," he said. "Ah, Captain, you here too?"

Marley had not noticed the captain, or Mrs. Carter; they sat there so quietly, enjoying the cool of the evening, or such cool as a July evening can find in central Ohio.

"My friend, Mr. Marley, Mrs. Carter—Glenn Marley—you've heard of him, Captain."

Marley bowed and said something. The presentation there in the darkness made it rather difficult for him, and neither the captain nor his wife moved. Lawrence sat down on the steps and fanned himself with his hat.

"Been a hot day, Captain," he said. "Think there's any sign of rain?" He sniffed the air.

## A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY

The captain did not need to sniff the air to be able to reply, in a voice that rumbled up from his bending figure, that he had no hope of any.

"Mayme's home, ain't she?" asked Lawrence, turning to Mrs. Carter.

"I'll go see," said Mrs. Carter, and she rose quickly, as if glad to get away, and the screen door slammed again.

"Billy was in the bank to-day," Lawrence went on, speaking to Captain Carter. "He said your wheat was ready to cut. Did you get Foose all right?"

"Yes," said the captain, "he'll give me next week."

"Do you have to board the threshers?"

"No, not this year; they bring along their own cook, and a tent and everything."

"Je-rusalem!" exclaimed Lawrence. "Things *are* changing in these days, ain't they? Harvesting ain't as hard on the women-folks as it used to be."

"No," said the captain, "but I pay for it, so much extra a bushel."

His head shook regretfully, but he would have

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lost his regrets in telling of the time when he had swung a cradle all day in the harvest field, had not Mrs. Carter's voice just then been heard calling up the stairs:

"Mayme!"

"Whoo!" answered a high, feminine voice.

"Come down. There's some one here to see you."

Mrs. Carter turned into the parlor, and the tall windows that opened to the floor of the veranda burst into light.

"She'll be right down, John," said Mrs. Carter, appearing in the door. "You give me your hats and go right in."

"All right," said Lawrence, and he got to his feet. "Come on, Glenn."

Mrs. Carter took the hats of the young men and hung them on the rack, where they might easily have hung them themselves. Then she went back to the veranda, letting the screen door bang behind her, and Lawrence and Marley entered the parlor. Marley took his seat on one of the haircloth chairs that seemed to have ranged themselves permanently along the walls, and Law-

## A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY

rence went to the square piano that stood across one corner of the room, and sat down tentatively on the stool, swinging from side to side.

Marley glanced at the pictures on the walls. One of them was a steel engraving of Lincoln and his cabinet; another, in a black oval frame, portrayed Captain Carter in uniform, his hair dusting the strapped shoulders of a coat made after the pattern that seems to have been worn so uncomfortably by the heroes of the Civil War. There was, however, a later picture of the captain, a crayon enlargement of a photograph, that had taken him in civilian garb. This picture, in its huge gilt frame, was the most aggressive thing in the room, except, possibly, the walnut what-not. Marley had a great fear of the what-not; it seemed to him that if he stirred he must topple it over, and dash its load of trinkets to the floor. Presently he heard the swish of skirts. Then a tall girl came in, and Lawrence sprang to his feet.

"Hello, Mayme. What'd you run for?" he said.

He had crossed the room and seized the girl's

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

hand. She flashed a rebuke at him, though it was evident that the rebuke was more out of deference to the strange presence of Marley than for any real resentment she felt.

"This is my friend, Mr. Marley, Miss Carter," Lawrence said. "You've heard me speak of him."

Marley edged away from the what-not, rose and took the hand the girl gave him. Then Miss Carter crossed to the black haircloth sofa and seated herself, smoothing out her skirts.

"Didn't know what to do, so we thought we'd come out and see you," said Lawrence.

"Oh, indeed!" said Miss Carter. "Well, it's too bad about you. We'll do when you can't find anybody else to put up with you, eh?"

"Oh, yes, you'll do in a pinch," chaffed Lawrence.

"Well, can't you find a comfortable seat?" the girl asked, still addressing Lawrence, who had gone back to the piano stool.

"I'm going to play in a minute," said Lawrence, "and sing."

"Well, excuse *me!*" implored Miss Carter. "Do let me get you a seat."

## A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY

Lawrence promptly went over to the sofa and leaned back in one corner of it, affecting a discomfort.

"Can't I get you a pillow, Mr. Lawrence?" Miss Carter asked presently. "Or perhaps a cot; I believe there's one somewhere in the attic."

"Oh, I reckon I can stand it," said Lawrence.

Marley had regained his seat on the edge of the slippery chair.

"Where's Vinie?" asked Lawrence.

"She's coming," answered Miss Carter.

"Taking out her curl papers, eh?" said Lawrence. "She needn't mind us."

Miss Carter pretended a disgust, but as she was framing a retort, somehow, the eyes of all of them turned toward the hall door. A girl in a gown of white stood there clasping and unclasping her hands curiously, and looking from one to another of those in the room.

"Come in, Lavinia," said Miss Carter. Something had softened her voice. The girl stepped into the room almost timidly.

"Miss Blair," said Miss Carter, "let me introduce Mr. Marley."



## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

The sudden consciousness that he had been sitting—and staring—smote Marley, and he sprang to his feet. Embarrassment overpowered him and he bowed awkwardly. Lawrence had been silent, and his silence had been a long one for him. Seeming to recognize this he hastened to say:

“Well, how’s the world using you, Vinie?”

The girl smiled and answered:

“Oh, pretty well, thank you, Jack.”

It grated on Marley to hear her called Vinie. Lavinia Blair! Lavinia Blair! That was her name. He had heard it before, of course, yet it had never sounded as it did now when he repeated it to himself. The girl had seated herself in a rocking-chair across the room, almost out of range, as it were. He was rather glad of this, if anything. It seemed to relieve him of the duty of talking to her. He supposed, of course, they would pair off somehow. The young people always did in Macochee. He supposed he had been brought there to pair off with Lavinia Blair. He liked the thought, yet the position had its responsibilities. Somehow he never could forget that he could not dance. He hoped they would not pro-

## A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY

pose dancing. He always had a fear of that in making calls, and all the calls he made seemed to come to it soon or late; some one always proposed it.

Marley was aware that Lawrence and Mayme Carter had resumed the exchange of their rude repartee, though he did not know what they had said. They kept laughing, too. Lavinia Blair seemed to join in the laughter if not in the badinage. Marley wished he might join in it. Jack Lawrence was evidently funnier than ever that night; Mayme Carter was convulsed. Now and then Lawrence said something to her in a tone too low for the others to hear, and these remarks pushed her to the verge of hysterics. Marley had a notion they were laughing at him.

Meanwhile Lavinia Blair sat with her hands in her lap, smiling as though she were amused. Marley wondered if he amused her. He felt that he ought to say something, but he did not know what to say. He thought of several things, but, as he turned them over in his mind, he was convinced that they were not appropriate. So he sat and looked at Lavinia Blair, looked at her eyes, her

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mouth, her hair. He thought he had never seen such a complexion.

Mayme Carter had snatched her handkerchief back from Lawrence, and retreated to her end of the sofa. There she sat up stiffly, folded her hands, and, though her mirth still shook her spasmodically, she said:

“Now, Jack, behave yourself.”

Lawrence burlesqued a surprise, and said:

“I’ll leave it to Vine if I’ve done anything.”

Marley wondered how much further abbreviation Lavinia Blair’s name would stand, but he was suddenly aware that he was being addressed. Miss Carter, with an air of dismissing Lawrence, said:

“You have not been in Macochee long, have you, Mr. Marley?”

Marley admitted that he had not, but said that he liked the town. When Lawrence explained that Marley was going to settle down there and become one of them, Miss Carter said she was awfully glad, but warned him against associating too much with Lawrence. This embarrassed Marley, if it did not Lawrence, and he immediately

## A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY

gave the scene to Lawrence, who guessed he would sing his song. To do so he went to the piano, and began to pick over the frayed sheets of music that lay on its green cover. To forestall him, however, Miss Carter rushed across the room and slid on to the piano stool herself, saying breathlessly:

"Anything to stop that!"

She struck a few vagrant chords, and Marley, glad of a subject on which he could express himself, pleaded with her to play. At last she did so. When she had finished, Lawrence clapped his hands loudly, and stopped only when a voice startled them. It was Mrs. Carter calling through the window:

"Play your new piece, Mayme!"

Miss Carter demurred, but after they had argued the question through the window, the daughter gave in, and played it. The music soothed Lawrence to silence, and when Miss Carter completed her little repertoire, his mockery could recover itself no further than to say:

"Won't you favor us, Miss Blair?"

When Lavinia Blair declined, he struck an imploring attitude and said:

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"Oh, please do! We're dying to hear you. You didn't leave your music at home, did you?"

Marley heard the chairs scraping on the veranda, and the screen door slammed once more. Then he heard Captain Carter go up the stairs, while Mrs. Carter halted in the doorway of the parlor long enough to say:

"You lock the front door when you come up, Mayme."

Mayme without turning replied "All right," and when her mother had disappeared she said:

"It's awful hot in here, let's go outside."

Marley found himself strolling in the yard with Lavinia Blair. The moon had not risen, but the girl's throat and arms gleamed in the starlight; her white dress seemed to be a cloud of gauze; she floated, rather than walked, there by his side. They paused by the gate. About them were the voices of the summer night, the crickets, the katydids, far away the frogs, chirping musically. They stood a while in the silence, and then they turned, and were talking again.

Marley did most of the talking, and all he said was about himself, though he did not realize

## A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY

that this was so. He had already told her of his life in the towns where his father had preached before he came to Macochee, and of his four years in college at Delaware. He tried to give her some notion of the sense of alienation he had felt as the son of an itinerant Methodist minister; for him no place had ever taken on the warm color and expression of home. He explained that as yet he knew little of Macochee, having been away at college when his father moved there the preceding fall. It was so easy to talk to her, and as he told her of his ambitions, the things he was going to do became so many, and so easy. He was going to become a lawyer; he thought he should go to Cincinnati.

"And leave Macochee?" said Lavinia Blair.

Marley caught his breath.

"Would you care?" he whispered.

She did not answer. He heard the crickets, the katydids, the frogs again; there came the perfume of the lilacs, late flowering that year; the heavy odor of a shrub almost overpowered him.

"My father is a lawyer," Lavinia said.

They had turned off the path, and were wander

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

ing over the lawn. The dew sparkled on it; and Marley became solicitous.

“Won’t you get your feet wet?” he asked.

The girl laughed at the idea, but she caught up her skirts, and they wandered on in the shade of the tall elms. Marley did not know where they were. The yard seemed an endless garden, immense, unknown, enchanted; the dark trees all around him stood like the forest of some park, and the lawn stretched away to fall over endless terraces; he imagined statues and fountains gleaming in the heavy shadows of the trees. The house seemed lost in the distance, though he felt its presence there behind him.

Once he saw the twinkle of a passing light in an upper story. He could no longer hear the voices of Mayme and Lawrence, but he caught the tinkling notes of a banjo, away off somewhere. Its music was very sweet. They strolled on, their feet swishing in the damp grass, then suddenly there was a rush, a loud barking, and a dog sprang at them out of the darkness. Lavinia gave a little cry. Marley was startled; he felt that he must run, yet he thought of the girl beside him. He

## A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY

must not let her see his fear. He stepped in front of her. He could feel her draw more closely to him, and he thrilled as the sense of his protectorship came to him. He must think of some heroic scheme of vanquishing the dog, but it stopped in its mad rush, and Lavinia, standing aside, said:

“Why, it’s only Sport!”

They laughed, and their laugh was the happier because of the relief from their fear.

“We must have wandered around behind the house,” said Lavinia. “There’s the shed.”

They turned, and went back. The enchantment of the yard had departed. Marley seemed to see things clearly once more, though his heart still beat as he felt the delicious sense of protectorship that had come over him as Lavinia shrank to his side at the moment the dog rushed at them. Nor could he ever forget her face as she smiled up at him in the little opening they came into on the side lawn. The young moon was just sailing over the trees. As they approached the veranda, Lawrence’s voice called out of the darkness:

“Well, where have you young folks been stealing away to?”



## CHAPTER II

WADE POWELL

Marley halted at the threshold and glanced up at the sign that swung over the doorway. The gilt lettering of the sign had long ago been tarnished, and where its black sanded paint had peeled in many weathers the original tin was as rusty as the iron arm from which it creaked. Yet Macochee had long since lost its need of the shingle to tell it where Wade Powell's law office was. It had been for many years in one of the little rooms of the low brick building in Miami Street, just across from the Court House; it was almost as much of an institution as the Court House itself, with which its triumphs and its trials were identified. Marley gathered enough courage from his inspection of the sign to enter, but once inside, he hesitated. Then a heavy voice spoke.

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"Well, come in," it said peremptorily.

Wade Powell, sitting with his feet on his table, held his newspaper aside and looked at Marley over his spectacles. Marley had had an ideal of Wade Powell, and now he had to pause long enough to relinquish the ideal and adjust himself to the reality. The hair was as disordered as his young fancy would have had it, but it was thinner than he had known it in his dreams, and its black was streaked with gray. The face was smooth-shaven, which accorded with his notion, though it had not been shaven as recently as he felt it should have been. But he could not reconcile himself to the spectacles that rested on Powell's nose, and pressed their bows into the flesh of his temples—the eagle eyes of the Wade Powell of his imagination had never known glasses.

When Wade Powell slowly pulled his spectacles from his nose and tossed them on to the table before him, he bent his eyes on Marley, and their gaze, under their heavy brows, somewhat restored him, but it could not atone for the disappointment. Perhaps the disappointment that Marley felt in this moment came from some dim,

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unrealized sense that Wade Powell was growing old. The spectacles, the gray in his hair, the wrinkles in his face, the looseness of the skin at his jaws and at his throat—where a fold of it hung between the points of his collar—all told that Wade Powell had passed the invisible line which marks life's summit, and that his face was turned now toward the evening. There was the touch of sadness in the indistinct conception of him as a man who had not altogether realized the ambitions of his youth or the predictions of his friends, and the sadness came from the intuition that the failure or the half-failure was not of the heroic kind.

The office in which he sat, and on which, in the long years, he had impressed his character, was untidy; the floor was dirty, the books on the shelves were dusty and leaning all awry; the set of the Ohio reports had not been kept up to date; one might have told by a study of them at just what period enterprise and energy had faltered, while the gaps here and there showed how an uncalculating generosity had helped a natural indolence by lending indiscriminately to other lawyers, who, with the lack of respect for the moral of the laws

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they pretended to revere, had borrowed with no thought of returning.

Two or three pictures hung crookedly on the walls; the table at which Powell sat was old and scarred; its ink-stand had long ago gone dry and been abandoned; a cheap bottle, with its cork rolling tipsily by its side, had taken the ink-stand's place. The papers scattered over the table had an air of hopelessness, as though they had grown tired, like the clients they represented, in waiting for Powell's attention. The half-open door at the back led into a room that had been, and possibly might yet be, used as a private office or consulting room, should any one care to brave its darkness and its dust; but as for Wade Powell, it was plain that he preferred to sit democratically in the outer office, where all might see him, and, what was of more importance to him, where he might see all.

The one new thing in the room was a typewriter, standing on its little sewing-machine table, in the corner of the room. There was no stenographer nor any chair for one; Marley imagined Powell, whenever he had occasion to write, sitting down

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

to the machine himself, and picking out his pleadings painfully, laboriously and slowly, letter by letter, using only his index fingers. And this somehow humbled his ideal the more. Marley almost wished he hadn't come.

"What's on your mind, young man?" said Wade Powell, leaning back in his chair and dropping his long arm at his side until his newspaper swept the floor. Marley had seated himself in a wooden chair that was evidently intended for clients, and he began nervously.

"Well, I—"

Here he stopped, overcome again by an embarrassment. A smile spread over Wade Powell's face, a gentle smile with a winning quality in it, and his face to Marley became young again.

"Tell your troubles," he said. "I've confessed all the young men in Macochee for twenty-five years. Yes— thirty-five—" He grew suddenly sober as he numbered the years and then exclaimed as if to himself:

"My God! Has it been that long?"

He took out his watch and looked at it as if it must somehow correct his reckoning. For a mo-

## WADE POWELL

ment, then, he thought; his gaze was far away. But Marley brought him back when he said:

“I only want—I only want to study law.”

“Oh!” said Powell, and he seemed somehow relieved. “Is that all?”

To Marley this seemed quite enough, and the disappointment he felt, which was a part of the effect Wade Powell’s office had had on him, showed suddenly in his face. Powell glanced quickly at him, and hastened to reassure him.

“We can fix that easily enough,” he said. “Have you ever read any law?”

“No,” said Marley.

“Been to college?”

Marley told him that he had just that summer been graduated and when he mentioned the name of the college Powell said:

“The Methodists, eh?”

He could hardly conceal a certain contempt in the tone with which he said this, and then, as if instantly regretting the unkindness, he observed:

“It’s a good school, I’m told.”

He could not, however, evince an entire ap-

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

proval, and so seeming to desert the subject he hastened on:

“What’s your name?”

“Glenn Marley.”

“Oh!” Wade Powell dropped his feet to the floor and sat upright. “Are you Preacher Marley’s son?”

Marley did not like to hear his father called “Preacher,” and when he said that he was the son of Doctor Marley, Powell remarked:

“I’ve heard him preach, and he’s a damn good preacher too, I want to tell you.”

Marley warmed under this profane indorsement. He had always, from a boy, felt somehow that he must defend his father’s position as a preacher from the world, as with the little world of his boyhood and youth he had always had to defend his own position as the son of a preacher.

“Yes, sir, he’s a good preacher, and a good man,” Powell went on. He had taken a cigar from his pocket and was nipping the end from it with his teeth. He lighted it, and leaned back comfortably again to smoke, and then in tardy hospitality

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he drew another cigar from his waistcoat pocket and held it toward Marley.

"Smoke?" he said, and then he added apologetically, "I didn't think; I never do."

Marley declined the cigar, but Powell pressed it on him, saying:

"Well, your father does, I'll bet. Give it to him with Wade Powell's compliments. He won't hesitate to smoke with a publican and sinner."

Marley smiled and put the cigar away in his pocket.

"I don't know, though," Powell went on slowly, speaking as much to himself as to Marley, while he watched the thick white clouds he rolled from his lips, "that he'd want you to be in my office. I know some of the *brethren* wouldn't approve. They'd think I'd contaminate you."

Marley would have hastened to reassure Powell had he known how to do so without seeming to recognize the possibility of contamination; but while he hesitated Powell avoided the necessity for him by asking:

"Did your father send you to me?"

He looked at Marley eagerly, and with an ex-



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pression of unfounded hope, as he awaited the answer.

"No," replied Marley, "he doesn't know. I haven't talked with him at all. I have to do something and I've always thought I'd go into the law. I presume it would be better to go to a law school, but father couldn't afford that after putting me through college. I thought I could read law in some office, and maybe get admitted that way."

"Sure," said Powell, "it's easy enough. You'll have to learn the law after you get to practising anyway—and there isn't much to learn at that. It's mostly a fake."

Marley looked at him in some alarm, at this new smiting of an idol.

"I began to read law," Powell went on, "under old Judge Colwin—that is, what I read. I used to sit at the window with a book in my lap and watch the girls go by. Still," he added with a tone of doing himself some final justice, "it was a liberal education to sit under the old judge's drip-pings. I learned more that way than I ever did at the law school."

He smoked on a moment, ruminating on his lost

## WADE POWELL

youth; then, bringing himself around to business again, he said:

“How’d you happen to come to me?”

“Well,” said Marley, haltingly, “I’d heard a good deal of you—and I thought I’d like you, and then I’ve heard father speak of you.”

“You have?” said Powell, looking up quickly.

“Yes.”

“What’d he say?”

“Well, he said you were a great orator and he said you were always with the under dog. He said he liked that.”

Powell turned his eyes away and his face reddened.

“Well, let’s see. If you think your father would approve of your sitting at the feet of such a Gamaliel as I, we can—” He was squinting painfully at his book-shelves. “Is that Blackstone over there on the top shelf?”

Marley got up and glanced along the backs of the dingy books, their calfskin bindings deeply browned by the years, their red and black labels peeling off.

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"Here's Blackstone," he said, taking down a book, "but it's the second volume."

"Second volume, eh? Don't see the first around anywhere, do you?"

Marley looked, without finding it.

"Then see if Walker's there."

Marley looked again.

"Walker's *American Law*," Powell explained.

"I don't see it," Marley said.

"No, I reckon not," assented Powell, "some one's borrowed it. I seem to run a sort of circulating library of legal works in this town, without fines—though we have statutes against petit larceny. Well, hand me Swan's *Treatise*. That's it, on the end of the second shelf."

Marley took down the book, and gave it to Powell. While Marley dusted his begrimed fingers with his handkerchief, Powell blew the dust off the top of the book; he slapped it on the arm of his chair, the dust flying from it at every stroke. He picked up his spectacles, put them on and turned over the first few leaves of the book.

"You might begin on that," he said presently, "until we can borrow a Blackstone or a Walker

## WADE POWELL

for you. This book is the best law-book ever written anyway; the law's all there. If you knew all that contains, you could go in any court and get along without giving yourself away; which is the whole duty of a lawyer."

He closed the book and gave it to Marley, who was somewhat at a loss; this was the final disappointment. He had thought that his introduction into the mysteries of the noble profession should be attended by some sort of ceremony. He looked at the book in his hand quite helplessly and then looked up at Powell.

"Is that—all?" he said.

"Why, yes," Powell answered. "Isn't that enough?"

"I thought—that is, that I might have some duties. How am I to begin?"

"Why, just open the book to the first page and read that, then turn over to the second page and read that, and so on—till you get to the end."

"What will my hours be?"

"Your hours?" said Powell, as if he did not understand. "Oh, just suit yourself."

Marley was looking at the book again.

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

"Don't you make any entry—any memorandum?" he asked, still unable to separate himself from the idea that something formal, something legal, should mark the beginning of such an important epoch.

"Oh, you keep track of the date," said Powell, "and at the end of three years I'll give you a certificate. You may find that you can do most of your reading at home, but come around."

Marley looked about the office, trying to imagine himself in this new situation.

"I'd like, you know," he said, "to do something, if I could, to repay you for your trouble."

"That's all right, my boy," said Powell. Then he added as if the thought had just come to him:

"Say, can you run a typewriter?"

"I can learn."

"Well, that's more than I can do," said Powell, glancing at his new machine. "I've tried, but it would take a stationary engineer to operate that thing. You might help out with my letters and my pleadings now and then. And I'd like to have you around. You'd make good company."

"Well," said Marley, "I'll be here in the morn-

## WADE POWELL

ing." He still clung to the idea that he was to be a part of the office, to be an identity in the local machinery of the law. As he rose to go, a young man appeared in the doorway. He was tall, and the English cap and the rough Scotch suit he wore, with the trousers rolled up over his heavy tan shoes, enabled Marley to identify him instantly as young Halliday. He was certain of this when Powell, looking up, said indifferently:

"Hello, George. Raining in London?"

"Oh, I say, Powell," replied Halliday, ignoring a taunt that had grown familiar to him, "that Zeller case—we would like to have that go over to the fall term, if you don't mind."

"Why don't you settle it?" asked Powell.

Halliday was leaning against the door-post, and had drawn a short brier pipe from his pocket. Before he answered, he paused long enough to fill it with tobacco. Then he said:

"You'll have to see the governor about that—it's a case he's been looking after."

"Oh, well," said Powell, with his easy acquiescence, "all right."

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE.

Halliday had pressed the tobacco into the bowl of the pipe and struck a match.

"Then, I'll tell old Bill," he said, pausing in his sentence to light his pipe, "to mark it off the assignment."

Marley watched Halliday saunter away, with a feeling that mixed admiration with amazement. He could not help admiring his clothes, and he felt drawn toward him as a college man from a school so much greater than his own, though he felt some resentment because Halliday had never once given a sign that he was aware of Marley's presence. His amazement came from the utter disrespect with which Halliday referred to Judge Blair. Old Bill! Marley had caught his breath. He would have liked to discuss Halliday with Powell, but the lawyer seemed to be as indifferent to Halliday's existence as Halliday had been to Marley's, and when Marley saw that Powell was not likely to refer to him, he started toward the door. As he went Powell resumptively called after him:

"I'll get a Blackstone for you in a day or two. Be down in the morning."

## WADE POWELL

Marley went away bearing Swan's *Treatise* under his arm. He looked up at the Court House across the way; the trees were stirring in the light winds of summer, and their leaves writhed joyously in the sun. The windows of the Court House were open, and he could hear the voice of some lawyer arguing a cause to the jury. Marley thought of Judge Blair sitting there, the jury in its box, the sleepy bailiff drowsing in his place, the accustomed attorneys and the angry litigants, and his heart began to beat a little more rapidly, for the thought of Judge Blair brought the thought of Lavinia Blair. And in the days to come, when he should be arguing a cause to a jury, as that lawyer, whose voice came pealing and echoing in sudden and surprising shouts through the open windows, was arguing a cause now, would Lavinia Blair be interested?

He had imagined that a day so full of importance for him would be marked by greater ceremonials, and yet while he was disappointed, he was reassured. He had solved a problem, he had done with inaction, he had made a beginning, he was entered at last upon a career. As all the events



## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

of the recent years rushed on him, the years of college life, the decisions and indecisions of his classmates, their vague troubles about a career, he felt a pride that he had so soon solved that problem. He felt a certain superiority too, that made him carry his head high, as he turned into Main Street and marched across the Square. It required only decision and life was conquered. He saw the years stretching out prosperously before him, expanding as his ambitions expanded. He was glad that he had tackled life so promptly, that he had come so quickly to an issue with it; it was not so bad, viewed thus close, as it had been from a distance. He laughed at the folly of all the talk he had heard about the difficulty of young men getting a start in these days; he must write to his fraternity fellows at once, and tell them what he had done and how he was succeeding. They would surely see that at the bar he would do, not only himself, but them, the greatest credit, and they would be proud.

## CHAPTER III.

### GREENWOOD LAKE

The girls, flitting about with nervous laughter and now and then little screams, had spread long cloths over the table of plain boards that had served so many picnic parties at Greenwood Lake; the table-cloths and the dresses of the girls gleamed white in the amber light that streamed across the little sheet of water, though the slender trees, freshened by the morning shower that threatened to spoil the outing, were beginning to darken under the shadows that diffused themselves subtly through the grove, as if there were exudations of the heavy foliage.

Lawrence, in his white ducks, stood by the table, assuming to direct the laying of the supper. His immense cravat of blue was the only bit of color about him, unless it were his red hair, which he

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

had had clipped that very morning, and his shorn appearance intensified his comic air. Marley, sitting apart on the stump of a small oak, could hear the burlesque orders Lawrence shouted at the girls. The girls were convulsed by his orders; at times they had to put their dishes down lest in their laughter they spill the food or break the china; just then Marley saw Mayme Carter double over suddenly, her mass of yellow hair lurching forward to her brow, while the woods rang with her laughter. The other men were off looking after the horses.

Lavinia moved quickly here and there, smiling joyously, her face flushed; though she laughed as the others did at Lawrence's drollery, she did not laugh as loudly, and she did not scream. Just now she rose from bending over the table, and brushed her brown hair from her brow with the back of her hand, while she stood and surveyed the table as if to see what it lacked. When she raised her hand the sleeve of her muslin gown fell away from her wrist and showed her slender forearm, white in the calm light of evening. Marley could not take his eyes from her.

## GREENWOOD LAKE

She ran into the pavilion, her little low shoes flashed below her petticoats, and he grew sad; when she reappeared, all her movements seemed to be new, to have fresh beauties. Then he suspected that the girls were laughing at him and he felt miserable.

He thought of himself sitting alone and apart, an awkward, ungainly figure. He longed to go away, yet he feared that, if he did, he would not have the courage to come back. He shifted his position, only to make matters worse. Then suddenly his feeling took the form of a rage with Lawrence; he longed to seize Lawrence and kick him, to pitch him into the lake, to humiliate him before the girls. He thought he saw all at once that Lawrence had been making fun of him, surreptitiously; that was what had made the girls laugh so.

There was some little consolation in the thought that Lavinia did not laugh as much as the others; perhaps, if she did not care to defend him, she at least pitied him. And then he began to pity himself. The whole evening stretched before him; pretty soon he would have to move up to the table,

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

and sit down on the narrow little benches that were fastened between the trees; then after supper they would begin their dancing and when that came he did not see what he could do.

The only pleasure he had had that afternoon had been on the way out; he had been alone with Lavinia, and the four miles of pleasant road that lay between the town and Greenwood Lake were too short for all the happiness Marley found in them. He could feel Lavinia again by his side, her hands folded on the thin old linen lap-robe. He could not recall a word they had said, but it seemed to him that the conversation had flowed on intimately and tranquilly; she had been so close and sympathetic; and he would always remember how her eyes had been raised to his. The fields with the wheat in shock had swept by in the beauty of harvest time; the road, its dust laid by the morning shower, had rolled under the wheels of the buggy softly, smoothly and noiselessly; the air had been odorous with the scent of green things freshened by the rain, and had vibrated with the sounds of summer.

Then suddenly his reverie was broken. The

## GREENWOOD LAKE

men were gathering about the table with the girls; all of them looked at him expectantly.

"Here, you!" called Lawrence. "Do you think we're going to do all the work? Come, get in the game, and don't look so solemn—this ain't a funeral."

They all laughed, and Marley felt his face flame, but he rose and went over to the table, halting in indecision.

"Run get some water," ordered Lawrence, imperatively waving his hand. "Mayme," he shouted, "hand him the pitcher! Step lively, now. The men-folks are hungry after their day's work. Has any one got a pitcher concealed about his person? What did you do with the pitcher, Glenn? Take it to water your horse?"

They were laughing uproariously, and Marley was plainly discomfited. But Lavinia stepped to his side, a large white pitcher in her hand. "I'll show you," she said.

They started away together, and Marley felt a protection in her presence. A little way farther he suddenly thought of the pitcher, which Lavinia still was bearing, and he took it from her. As he

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

seized the handle their fingers became for an instant entangled.

"Did I hurt you?" he asked.

"Oh, no!" she assured him, and as they walked on, out of the sight of the laughing group behind them, an ease came over him.

"Do you know where the well is?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," she answered. "It's down here. I could have come just as well as not."

"I'm glad to come," he said; and then he added, "with *you*."

They had reached the wooden pump behind the pavilion. The little sheet of water curved away like a crescent, following the course of the stream of which it was but a widening. Its little islands were mirrored in its surface. The sun was just going down, the sky beyond the lake was rosy, and the same rosy hue now suffused everything; the waters themselves were reddened.

It was very still, and the peace of the evening lay on them both. Lavinia stood motionless, and looked out across the water to the little Ohio hills that rolled away toward the west. She stood and gazed a long time, her hands at her sides, yet

## GREENWOOD LAKE

with their fingers open and extended, as if the beauty of the scene had suddenly transfixed her. Marley did not see the lake or the sun, the islands or the hills; he saw only the girl before him, the outline of her cheek, the down on it showing fine in the pure light, the hair that nestled at her neck, the curve from her shoulder to her arms and down to her intent fingers. At last she sighed, and looked up at him.

"Isn't it all beautiful?" she said solemnly.

"Beautiful?" he repeated, as if in question, not knowing what she said.

Just then they heard Lawrence hallooing, and Marley began to pump vigorously. He rinsed out the pitcher, then filled it, and they went back, walking closely side by side, and they did not speak all the way.

Mayme Carter, who, as it seemed, had a local reputation as a compounder of lemonade, had the lemons and the sugar all ready when Marley and Lavinia rejoined the group, and Lawrence, as he seized the pitcher, said:

"I see that, between you, you've spilled nearly



## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

all of the water, but I guess Mayme and I'll have to make it do."

The others laughed at this, as they did at all of Lawrence's speeches, and then they turned and laughed at Marley and Lavinia, though the men, who as yet did not feel themselves on terms with Marley, had a subtile manner of not including him in their ridicule, however little they spared Lavinia.

The supper was eaten with the hunger their spirits and the fresh air had given them and Marley, placed, as of course, by Lavinia's side, felt sheltered by her, as he felt sheltered by all the talk that raged about him. He wished that he could join in the talk, but he could not discover what it was all about. Once, in a desperate determination to assert himself, he did mention a book he had been reading, but his remark seemed to have a chilling effect from which they did not recover until Lawrence, out of his own inexhaustible fund of nonsense, restored them to their inanities. He tried to hide his embarrassment by eating the cold chicken, the ham and sardines, the potato chips and pickles, the hard-boiled eggs and sandwiches that went up

## GREENWOOD LAKE

and down the board in endless procession, and he was thankful, when he thought of it, that Lawrence seemed to forget him, though Lawrence had forgotten no one else there. He seemed to note accurately each mouthful every one took.

"Hand up another dozen eggs for Miss Winters, Joe," he called to one of the men, and then they all laughed at Miss Winters.

When the cake came, Lawrence identified each kind with some remark about the mother of the girl who had brought it, and tasted all, because, as he said, he could not afford to show partiality. The fun lagged somewhat as the meal neared its end, but Lawrence revived it instantly and sensationally by rising suddenly, bending far over toward Lavinia in a tragic attitude and saying:

"Why, Vine, child, you haven't eaten a mouthful! I do believe you're in love!"

The company burst into laughter, but they suddenly stopped when they saw Marley. His face showed his anger with them, and he made a little movement, but Lavinia smiled up at Lawrence, and said:

"Well, Jack, it's evident that *you're* not."

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

And then they all laughed at Lawrence, and the girls clapped their hands, while Marley, angry now with himself, tried to laugh with them.

When they stopped laughing Lawrence produced his cigarettes, and tossing one to Marley in a way that delicately conveyed a sense of intimacy and affection, he said:

“When you girls get your dishes done up we’ll be back and see if we can’t think up something to entertain you,” and then he called Marley and with him and the other men strolled down to the lake.

## CHAPTER IV

### MOONLIGHT

The dance was proposed almost immediately. Marley had hoped up to the very last minute that something, possibly a miracle, would prevent it, but scarcely had the men finished their first cigarettes before Howard was saying:

“Well, let’s be getting back to the girls. They’ll want to dance.”

Howard spoke as if the dancing would be a sacrifice on the part of the men to the pleasure of the girls, but they all turned at once, some of them flinging their cigarettes into the water, as if to complete the sacrifice, and started back. When they reached the pavilion, Payson and Gallard took instruments out of green bags, Payson a guitar and Gallard a mandolin, and Lawrence, bustling about over the floor, shoving the few chairs against the unplastered wooden walls, was shouting:

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE.

"Tune 'em up, boys, tune 'em up!"

The first tentative notes of the strings twanged in the hollow room, and Lawrence was asking the girls for dances, scribbling their names on his cuff with a disregard of its white polished linen almost painful.

"I'll have to divide up some of 'em, you know, girls," he said. "Jim and Elmer have to play, and that makes us two men shy. But I'll do the best I can—wish I could take you all in my arms at once and dance with you."

The girls, standing in an expectant, eager little group, clutched one another nervously, and pretended to sneer at Lawrence's patronage.

Marley was standing with Lavinia near the door. He was trying to affect an ease; he knew by the way the other girls glanced at him now and then that they were speculating on his possibilities as a partner; he tried just then to look as if he were going to dance as all the other men were, yet he felt the necessity of confessing to Lavinia.

"You know," he said contritely, "that I don't dance."

She looked up, a disappointment springing to her

## MOONLIGHT.

eyes too quickly for her to conceal it. She was flushed with pleasure and excitement, and tapping her foot in time with the chords Payson and Gallard were trying on their instruments. Marley saw her surprise.

"I ought not to have come," he said; "I've no business here."

The look of disappointment in Lavinia's eyes had gone, and in its place was now an expression of sympathy.

"It makes no difference," she said. And then she added in a low voice: "I'll not dance either; there are too many of us girls anyway."

"Oh, don't let me keep you from it," said Marley, and yet a joy was shining in his eyes. She turned away and blushed.

"I'll give you all my dances," she said; "we can sit them out."

"But it won't be any fun for you," protested Marley. And just then Lawrence came up.

"Say, Glenn," he said, "if you don't want to dance I'll take Lavinia for the first number."

The guitar and mandolin, after a long preliminary strumming to get themselves in tune, sud-

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE.

denly burst into *The Georgia Campmeeting*, and the couples were instantly springing across the floor.

“Come on, Vine,” said Lawrence, his fingers twitching. And Lavinia, eager, trembling, alive, casting one last glance at Marley, said “Just this one!” and went whirling away with Lawrence.

Marley moved aside, awkwardly, when the couples, sweeping in a long oval stream around the little room, whirled past him. Lavinia danced with a grace that almost hurt him; she was laughing as she looked up into Lawrence’s face, talking to him as they danced. Marley felt a gloom, almost a rage, settle on him. He looked up and down the room. At the farther end, through the door by which the musicians sat swinging their feet over their knees in time to the tune they played, he could see the man who kept the grounds at the lake, looking on at the dance; his wife was with him, and they smiled contentedly at the joy of the young people.

Marley could not bear their joy, any more than he could bear the joy of the dancers, and he looked away from them. Glancing along the wall he saw

## MOONLIGHT.

a girl, sitting alone. It was Grace Winters; she was older than the others, and she sat there sullenly, her dark brows contracted under her dark hair. Marley felt drawn toward her by a common trouble, and he thought, instantly, that he might appear less conspicuous if he went and sat beside her. As he approached, her sallow face brightened with a brilliant smile of welcome and she drew aside her skirts to make a place for him, though there was no one else on all that side of the room. Marley sat down.

"It's warm, isn't it?" he said.

"Yes," Miss Winters replied, "almost too warm to dance, don't you think?"

Marley tried to express his acquiescence in the polite smile he had seen the other men use before the dance began, but he did not feel that he carried it off very well.

"I should think you'd be dancing, Mr. Marley," Miss Winters said. "I hear you are a splendid dancer. Don't you care to dance this evening?"

"I can't dance," said Marley, crudely.

He was looking at Lavinia, following her young figure as it glided past with Lawrence. Miss



## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

Winters turned away. Her face became gloomy again, and she said nothing more. Marley was absorbed in Lavinia, and they sat there together silent, conspicuous and alone, in a wide separation.

Marley thought the dance never would end. It seemed to him that the dancers must drop from fatigue; but at last the mandolin and guitar ceased suddenly, the girls cried out a disappointed unisonant "Oh!" and then they all laughed and clapped their hands. Lavinia and Lawrence were coming up, glowing with the joy of the dance.

"Oh, that was splendid, Jack!" Lavinia cried, putting back her hair with that wave of her hand.

Lawrence's face was redder than ever. He leaned over and in a whisper that was for Lavinia and Marley together he said:

"Lavinia, you're the queen dancer of the town." And then he turned to Miss Winters.

"Grace," he said, distributing himself with the impartiality he felt his position as a social leader demanded, "you've promised me a dance for a long time. Now's my chance."

"Why certainly, Jack," Miss Winters said, with her brilliant smile, and then she took Lawrence's

## MOONLIGHT

arm and drew him away, as if otherwise he might escape.

“Take me outdoors!” said Lavinia to Marley. “Those big lamps make it so hot in here.”

Marley was glad to leave, and they went out on to the little piazza of the pavilion. Lavinia stood on the very edge of the steps, and drank in the fresh air eagerly.

“Oh!” she said. “Oh! Isn’t it delicious!”

The darkness lay thick between the trees. The air was rich with the scent of the mown fields that lay beyond the grove. The insects shrilled contentedly. Marley stood and looked at Lavinia, standing on the edge of the steps, her body bent a little forward, her face upturned. She put back her hair again.

“Let’s go on down!” she said, a little adventurous quality in her tone. She ran lightly down the steps, Marley after her.

“Won’t you take cold?” he asked, bending close to her.

She looked up and laughed. They were walking on, unconsciously making their way toward the edge of the little lake. Marley felt the white form

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

floating there beside him and a happiness, new, unknown before, came to him. They were on the edge of the little lake. Before them the water lay, dark now, and smooth. A small stage was moored to the shore and a boat was fastened to it. They could hear the light lapping of the water that barely stirred the boat. Presently Lavinia ran out on to the stage. She gave a little spring, and rocked it up and down; then smiled up at Marley like a child venturing in forbidden places. Marley stepped carefully on to the stage.

"Isn't it a perfect night?" Lavinia said, looking up at the dark purple sky, strewn with all the stars. Marley looked at her white throat.

"The most beautiful night I ever knew!" he said. He spoke solemnly, devoutly, and Lavinia turned and gazed on him. Marley touched the boat with the toe of his shoe.

"We might row," he said almost timidly.

"Could we?" inquired Lavinia.

"If we may take the boat."

"Oh, of course—anybody may. Can you row?"

Marley laughed. He had rowed in the college crew on the old Olentangy at Delaware. His

## MOONLIGHT

laugh was a complete answer to Lavinia. She approached the boat, and Marley bent over and drew it alongside the stage.

"Get in," he said. It was good to find something he could do. He helped her carefully into the boat, and held it firmly until she had arranged herself in the stern, her feet against the cleats, and her white skirts tucked about her. Then he took his seat, shipped the oars and shoved off. He swept the boat out into the deep water, and rowed away up the lake. He rowed precisely, feathering his oars, that she might see how much a master he was. They did not speak for a long time. First one, then the other, of the little islands swept darkly by; the water slapped the bow of the boat as Marley urged it forward. The lights of the pavilion on the shore twinkled an instant, then went out behind the trees. They could hear the distant mellow thrumming of the guitar and the tinkle of the mandolin.

"Are you too cool?" he asked presently.

"Oh, no, not at all!" said Lavinia.

"Hadn't you better take my coat?" Marley per-

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

sisted. The idea of putting his coat about her thrilled him.

"You'll need it," she said.

"No, I'll be warm rowing."

She shook her head, and smiled. They drifted on. Still came the distant strumming of the guitar and the tinkle of the mandolin. Marley thought of the young people dancing, and then, noting Lavinia's silence, he asked, out of the doubt that was his one remaining annoyance:

"Wouldn't you rather be back there dancing?"

"No, no!" she answered softly.

"I'm ashamed of myself."

"Why?" She started a little.

"Because I can't dance!" There was guilt in his tone.

"You mustn't feel that way about it," Lavinia said. "It's nothing."

"Isn't it?"

"No. It's easy to learn."

"I never could learn."

Lavinia was still, and Marley thought she assented to this. But in another moment she spoke again.

## MOONLIGHT

"I—" she began, and then she hesitated.

Marley stopped rowing and rested on his oars. The water lapped the bows of the boat as it slackened its speed.

"I could teach you," Lavinia went on.

"Could you?" Marley leaned forward eagerly.

"I'd like to." She was trailing one white hand in the water.

"Will you?"

"Yes," she said. "We can do it over at Mayme's —any time. She'll play for us."

Marley felt a great gratitude, and he wondered how he could pour it forth upon her.

"You are too good to me," he exclaimed.

Then, suddenly, a change came over the dark surface of the waters. A mellow quality touched them; they seemed to tremble ecstatically, then they broke into sparkling ripples; the air quivered with a luminous beauty and a light flooded the little valley. Marley and Lavinia turned instinctively and looked up, and there, over the tops of the trees, black a moment before, now rounded domes of silver, rose the moon. They gazed at it a long time. Finally Marley turned and looked at La-

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE.

vinia. Her white dress had become a drapery, her arms gleamed, her eyes were lustrous in the transfiguration of the moonlight. He could see that her lips were slightly parted, and her fingertips, dipped in the cool water over the gunwale of the boat, trailed behind them a long narrow thread of silver. They looked into each other's eyes, and neither spoke. They drifted on. At last, Marley said:

"Lavinia!"

She stirred.

"Do you know—" he began, and then he stopped. "Don't you know," he went on, "can't you see, that I love you?"

He rested his arms on the oars, and leaned over toward her.

"I've loved you ever since that first night—do you remember? I know—I know I'm not good enough, but can't you—can't I—love you?"

He saw her eyelids fall, and as she turned and looked over the side of the boat, she put forth her hand, and he took it.

They were awakened from the dream by a call,

## MOONLIGHT

and after what seemed to Marley a long time, he finally remembered the voice as Lawrence's.

"We must go back," he said reluctantly. "How long have we been gone?"

"I don't know," said Lavinia. He heard her sigh.

Marley pulled the boat in the direction whence came the hallooing voice; he had quite lost all notion of their whereabouts. But presently they saw the lights of the pavilion, and then the dark figures of the men, and the white figures of the girls on shore.

As they pulled up and Marley sprang out of the boat to the landing stage, Lawrence said:

"Well, where have you babes been?"

Marley helped Lavinia out of the boat.

"We've been rowing," he said.

"We thought you'd been drowned," said Lawrence.

Marley and Lavinia drove home together in silence. In the light of the moon, the road was silver, and the fields with their shocks of wheat were gold.



## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

to dissipate their cares. She went to the edge of the veranda and pulled a few leaves from the climbing rose-vine that grew there, and the judge put on his glasses and spread out his paper.

"I'll take her out for a drive this afternoon," said Mrs. Blair, turning to go indoors.

"She'll be all right," said the judge, already deep in the political columns.

That night at supper, the judge looked at Lavinia closely, and after a while he said:

"You're not eating, Lavinia. Don't you feel well?"

Lavinia turned to her father and smiled.

"Oh, I'm all right."

Her smile perplexed the judge.

"You look pale," he said.

Mrs. Blair glanced warningly at him the length of the table.

"My girl's losing her color," he forged ahead.

Lavinia dropped her eyelids, and a look of pain appeared in her face, causing it to grow paler.

"Please don't worry about me, papa," she said.

Mrs. Blair divined Lavinia's dislike of this personal discussion. She tried to catch her hus-

## THE SERENADE

band's eye again, but he was looking at Lavinia narrowly through his glasses.

"Did you go riding this afternoon?" he asked as if he were examining a witness whom counsel had not drawn out properly.

"Yes," Mrs. Blair hastened to say. "We drove out the Ludlow a long way."

"She was riding last night, too," said Connie.

"Who with?" demanded Chad, turning to Connie with the challenge he always had ready for her.

"Who with?" retorted Connie. "Why, Glenn Marley, of course. Who else?"

"Well, what of it?" demanded Chad. "What's it to you?"

"Oh, children, children!" protested Mrs. Blair, wearily. "Do give us a little peace!"

"Well, she began it," said Chad.

Connie was eating savagely, but she whirled on Chad, speaking with difficulty because her mouth was filled with food:

"You shut up, will you?"

Chad laughed with a contempt almost theatrical, waved his hand lightly and said:

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

"Run away, little girl, run away."

Mrs. Blair asked the judge why he did not correct his children, and though the sigh he gave expressed the hopelessness, as it seemed to him, of bringing the two younger members of his train into anything like decorous behavior, he laid his knife and fork in his plate.

"This must cease," he said. "It is scandalous. One might conclude that you were the children of some family in Lighttown."

"It is very trying," said Mrs. Blair, acquiescing in her husband's reproof. "They are just like fire and tow." She said this quite impersonally and then turned to Connie: "If you can't behave yourself, I'll have to send you from the table."

"That's it!" wailed Connie. "That's it! Blame everything on to me!"

Mrs. Blair looked severely at her, and Connie's face reddened. She glanced angrily at her mother and began again:

"Well, I—"

The judge rapped the table smartly with his knuckles.

"Now I want this stopped!" he said. "And

## THE SERENADE

right away. If it isn't I'll—" He was about to say if it wasn't he would clear the room, as he was fond of saying whenever the idle spectators in his court showed signs of being human, but he did not finish his sentence. Chad was subdued and decorous, and Connie drooped her head, and began to gulp her food. Her eyes were filling with tears and the tears began to fall, slowly, one by one, splashing heavily into her plate.

Lavinia was trembling; she tried to control herself, tried to lift her glass, but when she did, her hand shook so that the water was likely to spill. This completed the undoing of her nerves, her eyes suddenly flooded with tears, and she snatched her handkerchief from her lap, rose precipitately, and hurried from the room, dropping her napkin as she went. They heard her going up the stairs, and presently the door of her room closed.

Connie had followed Lavinia with her misty eyes as she left the table and now she too prepared to leave. She felt a sudden pity springing from her great love of her older sister, and her great pride in her, and she felt a contrition, though she tried to convict Chad, as the latest object of her fiery and erratic temper, by glowering at him.

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"I'll go to her," she said, "I can comfort her!"

"No, stay where you are," said her mother.

"Just leave her alone."

The evening light of the summer day flooded into the dining-room; outside a robin was singing. In the room there was constraint and heavy silence, broken only by the slight clatter of the silver or the china. But after a while the judge spoke:

"Did Lavinia go to the picnic with young Marley?" he asked. He regretted instantly that he had revived the topic that had given rise to the difficulty, but as it lay on the minds of all, it was impossible, just then, to escape its influence.

"I believe so," said Mrs. Blair. "He really seems like a nice young man."

The judge scowled.

"I don't know," he said. "He's in the office of Wade Powell—I suppose he is the one, isn't he?" He thought it unbecoming that a judge should show an intimate knowledge of the relations of young men who were merely studying law.

"Yes, sir," said Chad, maintaining his own dignity.

## THE SERENADE

"Everybody seems to speak well of him," said Mrs. Blair.

"But I can't quite reconcile that with his selecting Wade Powell as a preceptor. I would hardly consider his influence the best in the world, and I would imagine that Doctor Marley would hold to the same opinion."

Judge Blair spoke with a certain disappointment in Doctor Marley. He had gone to hear him preach once or twice, and found, as he said, an intellectual quality in his utterances that he missed in the sermons Mr. Hill had been preaching for twenty years in the Presbyterian church.

"Perhaps he doesn't know Wade Powell," said Mrs. Blair. "Doctor Marley is comparatively a stranger here, you know."

"Yes, I presume that explains it. But—" he shook his head. He could not forgive any one who showed respect for Wade Powell. "Powell has little business except a certain criminal practice, and now and then a personal injury case."

"Is there anything wrong in personal injury cases?" asked Mrs. Blair.

The judge looked at his wife in surprise.

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

"Well, I suppose you know, don't you," he said, "that such cases are taken on contingent fees?" He spoke with the natural judicial contempt of the poor litigant.

"Of course, dear," she replied, "I shall not undertake to defend Mr. Powell. He's a wild sort."

"Yes; a drunkard, practically," said Judge Blair, "and an infidel besides. The moral environment there is certainly not one for a young man—"

"Is he really an *infidel*?" asked Mrs. Blair, abruptly dropping her knife and fork.

"Well," replied the judge with the judicial affectation of fairness, "he's at least a free-thinker. Perhaps agnostic were the better word. That is one reason why I can not understand Doctor Marley's permitting his son to be associated with him. It seems to me to argue a weakness, or a lack of observation in the doctor, as it does a certain depravity of taste in his son."

They discussed Marley until the meal was done, and Connie and Chad had gone out of doors. Judge Blair followed his wife into the sitting-room.

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"I'm worried, I'll admit," said the judge. "What could it have been that so distressed her?"

"Oh well, the children's little quarrels were too much for her nerves."

"I suppose so."

They were silent and thoughtful, sitting together, rocking gently in their chairs as the twilight stole into the room.

"It's too bad he's going to study law," the judge said after a while.

He shook his gray head dubiously.

"But you always say that about any one who's going to study law," Mrs. Blair argued. "You even said it about George Halliday when his father took him into partnership."

"Well, it's bad business nowadays unless a young man wants to go to the city, and it's hard to get a foothold there."

"But you began as a lawyer," she urged, as though he had finished as something else.

"It was different in my day."

"And you've always done well in the law," Mrs. Blair went on, ignoring his distinction.

"Oh yes," the judge said in a tone that expressed



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a sense of individual exception. "But I went on the bench just in time to save my bacon. There's no telling what might have become of us if I had remained in the practice."

They were silent long enough for him to feel the relief he had always found in his salaried position, and then he said:

"You don't suppose—"

"Oh, certainly not!" his wife hastened to assure him.

"Well, I think it would be well, perhaps, to watch her closely. I don't just like the notion."

"But his father is—"

"Yes, but after all, we really know nothing about him."

"That is true."

"And then Lavinia's so young."

"Yes."

"I'd go to her."

"After a while," Mrs. Blair said.

They heard steps on the veranda, and then the voices of Mr. and Mrs. Chenowith who had run across, as Mrs. Chenowith said, when Mrs. Blair met them in the darkness that filled the wide hall,

## THE SERENADE

to see how they all were. The Chenowiths begged Mrs. Blair not to light the gas; they preferred to sit out of doors. The Chenowiths remained all the evening. When they had gone, the judge drew the chairs indoors, while Mrs. Blair rolled up the wide strip of red carpet that covered the steps of the veranda. And when they had gone up to their room, Mrs. Blair stole across to Lavinia, softly closing the door behind her.

She found the girl stretched on her bed, her face buried in the pillows, which were wet with her tears.

"What is troubling my little girl?" she asked. She sat down on the side of the bed, and lightly stroked Lavinia's soft hair. The girl stirred, and drew herself close to her mother. Mrs. Blair did not speak, but continued to stroke her hair, and waited. Presently Lavinia cried out:

"Oh, mama! mama!"

And then she was in her mother's arms, weeping on her mother's breast.

"I've never kept anything from you before, mama," Lavinia cried.

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"No," Mrs. Blair whispered. "Can't you tell mama now?"

And then with her mother's arms about her Lavinia told her all. When she had finished she lay tranquilly. Mrs. Blair was relieved and yet her troubles had but grown the more complicated. She saw all the intricate elements with which she would have to deal, and she quailed before them, realizing what tact would be required of her.

"The coming of love should be a time of joy, dear," she said presently. Even in the darkness, she could see the white blur of Lavinia's face change its expression. A smile had touched it.

"It should, shouldn't it, mama?"

"Yes, indeed."

"But I never kept anything from you before."

Mrs. Blair laughed.

"But you kept this only a day, dear. That doesn't count."

"It was a long day."

"I know, sweetheart." The mother kissed her, and they were silent a while.

"I do love him so," said Lavinia, presently.

"And you'll love him too, mama, I know you will."

## THE SERENADE

"I'm sure of that, dear."

"But what of papa?"

Mrs. Blair felt the girl grow tense in her arms.

"That will all come right in time," said Mrs. Blair.

"Will you tell him?"

"Not just now, dear. We'll have this for a little secret of our own. There's plenty of time. You are young, you know, and so is Glenn."

"I love to hear you call him Glenn."

Mrs. Blair remained with Lavinia until she had tucked her into her bed.

"Just my little child," the mother whispered over the girl. "Just my little child."

"Yes, always that," said Lavinia. And her mother kissed her again and again, and left her in the dark.

When Mrs. Blair rejoined her husband, he laid down the book he always read before retiring, and looked up with the question in his eyes.

"She's just a little nervous and tired," Mrs. Blair said. "She'll be all right in the morning. I think it best not to notice her."

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

"Do you think we'd better have Doctor Pierce see her?"

"Oh, not at all!" Mrs. Blair laughed, and the judge, reassured, went back to his book.

They were awakened from their first doze that night by voices singing.

"It's some of the darkies from Gooseville," said Mrs. Blair. "They're out serenading."

"Yes," said the judge. "It is sweet to fall asleep by."

At the sound of the singing Lavinia had crept from her bed and crouched in her white night-dress before the open window; the shutters were closed. She heard the melody from far down the street. The singing ceased, then began again, drawing nearer and nearer. Presently she heard the fall of feet on the sidewalk before the house, and the low tones of voices in hurried consultation. And then a clear baritone voice rose, and she heard it begin the song:

"Oh the sun shines bright in my old Kentucky  
home,  
'Tis summer, the darkies are gay."

She knew the voice. Her heart swelled and the

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tears came again and there alone in the fragrant night she opened her arms and stretched them out into the darkness.

## CHAPTER VI

### LOVE'S ARREARS

The days following the picnic had been no easier for Marley than they had been for Lavinia. As he looked back on that night, a fear took hold of him; the whole experience, the most wonderful of his life, grew more and more unreal. Much as he longed to see Lavinia again, he was afraid to go to her home; he wondered whether he should write her a note; perhaps she would think him false, perhaps she would think he had already forgotten her; the idea tormented him; he did not know what to do. He had seen her but once, and then at a distance; the Blairs' well-known surrey had stopped in the middle of the Square, and George Halliday stood leaning into the carriage chatting with Lavinia. Marley had but a glimpse of Lavinia's face, pink in the shadow of

## LOVE'S ARREARS

the surrey-top. As they drove away she had turned with a smile and a nod at Halliday. The sight had affected Marley strangely.

He felt himself so weak and incapable in this affair that he longed to discuss it with some one, and on Sunday afternoon he found his mother at her window with the *Christian Advocate*, which replaced, in her case, the nap nearly every one else took at that hour.

"How old was father when you were married, mother?" he began.

He spoke out of that curious ignorance of the lives of their parents so common to children; he had never been able to realize his parents as having separate and independent existences before his own. Mrs. Marley laid her paper by, and a smile came to her face.

"He was twenty-two," she said.

"Just my age," observed Marley.

Mrs. Marley looked up hastily.

"You're not thinking of getting married, are you, Glenn?" she asked.

"No," he said with a laugh.

"My goodness! You're just a boy!"



## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

"But I'm as old as father was."

"Y—es," said Mrs. Marley, "but then—"

"But then, what?"

"That was different."

Marley smiled.

"Had father entered the ministry yet?" he said presently.

"Yes, we were married in his first year. He had been teaching school, and the fall he was admitted to the conference he was sent out to the Gibsonburg circuit in Green County. We were married in the spring."

Her face flushed, and she turned the pages of her paper with a dreamy deliberation.

"Ah, but your father was a handsome young man, Glenn!" she said presently.

"He's handsome yet," Marley replied with the pride he always felt in his father. And then he asked:

"Did he have any money?"

"Yes," she said, and she laughed, "just a hundred dollars!"

"A hundred dollars! Well, he had nerve, didn't he? And so did you!"

## LOVE'S ARREARS

"We had more than that," said Mrs. Marley, solemnly.

Marley looked at his mother suddenly. Her face seemed for an instant to be transfigured in the afternoon glow.

He might have told her then; he was on the point of it, but a footfall on the brick walk outside caused him to look up, and he saw Lawrence coming into the yard. Lawrence beckoned him and he went out.

"Come on," said Lawrence. "Let's go out to Carters'."

Marley looked a question at him, and the smile which Lawrence never could repress long at a time was twitching at the corners of his large mouth.

"She'll be there."

"How do you know?" asked Marley.

Lawrence smiled a little more significantly.

When they got to the Carters' they found Mayme and Lavinia together in the yard, strolling about in apparent aimlessness, yet with an expectancy in their manner that belied its quality of mere idleness. In the look Lavinia gave him all of Marley's perplexities vanished. Lawrence stood by with a

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grin on his red face, and Mayme Carter's eyes danced. She and Lawrence assumed almost immediately an elder, paternal manner, and looked on at the lovers' meeting as from far heights that were to be reached only after all such youthful experiences had long since become possible in retrospect alone. Still smiling, they edged away, and left the lovers alone.

"Is it really true?" Marley asked.

Lavinia colored a little as she smiled up at him.

"And you are happy?" he asked.

"So happy!" she said.

And then all at once a cloud came over her eyes. She closed them an instant.

"What is it?" he asked in alarm.

"Nothing."

"Tell me."

"It's nothing." She was smiling again, as if to show that her happiness was complete. "See?" Her eyes were blinking rapidly.

"I'm glad," he said.

As they turned and walked across the yard Marley looked at her nervously.

"Do you know," he said, "that I couldn't re-

## LOVE'S ARREARS

member what color your eyes were?" He spoke with all the virtue there is in confession.

"What color are they?" she asked, suddenly closing her eyes.

"They're blue," Marley replied, saying the word ecstatically, as if it had a new, wonderful meaning for him.

"Connie says they're green."

"Connie?"

"Yes, don't you know? She's my younger sister."

"Oh." He did not know any of her family, and the baffling sense of unreality came over him again.

"You'll know her," said Lavinia, and added thoughtfully: "I hope she'll like you. Then there's Chad, my little brother."

Marley was growing alarmed at the intricacies of an introduction into a large family, the characters of which were as yet like the characters in the first few chapters of a novel, but he thought it would not reflect on him to admit that he did not know Chad, seeing that he was merely a little brother.

"He admires you immensely," said Lavinia.

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"Does he?" said Marley, eagerly, instantly loving Chad. "How does he know me?"

"He says you were a football player at college."

Marley laughed a modest deprecation of his own prowess.

"But I knew your voice," said Lavinia.

"Did you? When did you hear it?"

"As if you didn't know!"

"Honestly," he protested. "Tell me."

"Why, that night that you serenaded me."

He was regretting that she had outdone him in observation, but she suddenly looked up and said:

"Oh, Glenn! What a beautiful voice you have!"

It was the first time she had ever called him Glenn, and it produced in him a wonderful sensation.

They had come to a little bench, and, sitting there, they could only look at each other and smile. Marley noticed that a little line of freckles ran up over the bridge of Lavinia's nose. They were very beautiful, he thought, and yet he had never heard of freckles as one of the elements of a woman's beauty. Then he leaned back and looked about the yard.

## LOVE'S ARREARS

He had always thought of it as it seemed that first night, enormous, enchanted, with wide terraces and fountains, and white statues gleaming through the green shrubbery. But now he saw no terraces, no statuary, no fountains, and no wide lawns; nothing but a cramped little yard crowded with bushes and trees, and surrounded by a weathered fence that had lost several pickets. He looked around behind the house where he had fancied long stables with big iron lamps over the doors, but now he saw nothing but an old woodshed and a barn on the rear end of the lot. The cracks in the barn were so wide that he could see the light of day between them as through a kinetoscope. He heard a horse stamping fretfully at the flies.

"It was here," he said, "that I first saw you." He did not speak his whole thought.

"Yes," she answered. "I remember."

"That was a wonderful night, the most wonderful of my life, except the one at the lake."

He drew close to her. "I loved you at first sight," he whispered.

"Did you?" She looked at him in reverence.

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

other's lives. They bemoaned all the years they had been compelled to live without knowing each other, and their one quarrel with fate was that they had had to wait until so late in life before meeting; and yet they finally consoled themselves for this deprivation by discovering that they had really always known and loved each other. They were now able to compare strange experiences of soul and, in the new light they possessed, to identify them as communings of their spirits across time and space.

"I've always believed somehow in the Swedenborgians," Lavinia said, "but I never really understood before what they meant by affinities."

They looked at each other in a silence that became somber, and was broken at last by Lavinia.

"I've told mama," she said.

"You have?" Marley gasped.

"Yes."

"And she—?"

"She was sweet about it. She will love you, I know."

## LOVE'S ARREARS

Marley felt a sudden love for Lavinia's mother. And then his fear returned at Lavinia's sinister,

"But—"

"But what?"

"She says we must wait."

"Oh!" Marley said with a relief. He felt their present happiness so great that he could afford to waive any claim on the future. And yet he was troubled; he felt that somehow a depression lay on Lavinia. He wondered what its cause could be. Presently it came to him suddenly.

"And your father?" he asked.

"He doesn't know—yet."

"Will he—?"

"He's very—" she hesitated, not liking to seem disloyal to her father. Finally she said "peculiar," and then further qualified it by adding "sometimes."

The sadness that lies so near to the joy in lovers' hearts came over them, and yet they found a kind of joy in that too.

"I'll go to him, of course," Marley said presently.

"Oh, you're so brave!"



## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

But this tribute did not tend to reassure Marley. It rather suggested terrors he had not thought of. Yet in the necessity of maintaining the manly spirit he forced a laugh.

"Of course," he continued, "I'll go to him. I meant to from the first."

"But not just yet," she pleaded.

"Well," he yielded, not at all unwillingly, "it shall be as you say."

He could not dispel her sadness, nor could he conquer his own. A little tremor ran through her, and he felt it electrically along his arm.

"What is it, sweetheart?" he pleaded. "Tell me, won't you? We must have no secrets, you know."

"Oh, Glenn," she broke out, "I'm afraid!"

She spoke with intuitive apprehension.

"Of what?"

"Our happiness!"

He tried to laugh again.

"Do you think it will ever be?" she asked.

"I know it," he said earnestly. "I have nothing but faith—our love is strong enough for anything!"

## LOVE'S ARREARS

"You comfort me," she said simply.

Lavinia spent the night with Mayme Carter, and the house sounded until long after midnight with the low, monotonous drone of their confidential voices.

## CHAPTER VII

### AN UNNECESSARY OPPOSITION

Marley heard on Monday evening that Judge Blair had gone to Cincinnati, and the news filled him with a high if somewhat culpable joy. He found Lavinia and her mother on the veranda, and Lavinia said, with a grave simplicity:

“Mama, this is Glenn.”

“I’m very glad to have you come,” said Mrs. Blair, trying instantly to rob the situation of the embarrassment she felt it must have for the young man.

Marley could not say a word, but he put all his gratitude in the pressure he gave Mrs. Blair’s hand. The light that came from the hall was dim, and though Mrs. Blair could see that Marley was straight and carried himself well, his face was blurred by the shadows. She turned to Lavinia.

## AN UNNECESSARY OPPOSITION

"Will you bring out another chair, dear, or would you prefer to go indoors?"

Then, seeing an advantage in this latter alternative, she decided for them:

"Perhaps we'd better go in, I fear it's cool out here."

She held back the screen door and Lavinia whisked excitedly into the hall. Mrs. Blair led the way to the parlor and sent Lavinia for a match. Then, turning to Marley, waiting there in the darkness, she said:

"She has told me, Glenn."

Marley felt something tender, maternal in her voice; the way she spoke his name affected him.

"But she is young, very young; she is just a girl. We wish, of course, for nothing but her happiness, and you must be patient, very patient. It must not be, if it is to be, for a long time. What does your own mother think of it?"

"I haven't told her."

"You haven't!"

"No. I felt I hardly had the right yet—not before I spoke to Judge Blair, you know. I think

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE.

I shall speak to him just as soon as he gets home." He spoke impulsively; until that moment he had been thrusting the thought from him, but Mrs. Blair's manner led him into confidences. In the immediate fear that he had been precipitant, he looked to her for help; she seemed the sort of woman to wish to save others all the trouble she could, one whose life was full of sacrifices, none the less noble, perhaps, because she made so little of them herself. But a perplexity showed in her eyes and before she could reply, Lavinia was back. With an intimate, domestic impulse Lavinia pressed the match into Marley's hand, and said:

"You do it; I can't reach."

Marley groped with his upheld hand, and when Lavinia guided him to the middle of the room, he lighted the gas. Mrs. Blair looked at him for a moment and Lavinia, standing by, as if awaiting her decision, glowed with happiness. Mrs. Blair's smile completed the fond, maternal impression Marley had somehow felt when she was standing by him in the darkness. Her full matronly figure, even in the tendency to corpulence of her middle years, had preserved its graceful lines; and Marley

## AN UNNECESSARY OPPOSITION

regretted the disappearance of this wholesome, cheerful woman as she passed out of the room.

Judge Blair got home from Cincinnati on Sunday morning, worn by his work, and maddened by the din of the city to which he was so unaccustomed. Walking up the familiar streets, he had been glad of their shade and that pervading sense of a Sunday that still remains a Sabbath in Maccochee. He had been a little piqued, at first, because his wife had not met him at the train, though she had not, to be sure, known that he was coming. She had gone to Sunday-school, and Connie gave him his breakfast—that is, she sat at the table with him, watching him eat and answering the questions he put to her about the happenings in Maccochee while he had been away.

It was not strange that Connie should talk mostly, after she yielded to the gnawing temptation to tell him at all, of the nightly visits Marley had made to the house. She did this in a certain resentment she felt with Lavinia, a resentment that came from an annoying jealousy she was beginning to have of Marley, as if, in installing himself in

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

her sister's heart, he had evicted all other affections from it.

The judge, with his constant affectation of what he considered the judicial attitude of mind, tried to weigh Connie's somewhat prejudiced evidence impartially, but he was troubled and annoyed that the peace he had been looking forward to all the week should be jeopardized immediately on his coming home.

It was not until afternoon that he had an opportunity to question his wife, and he began with a severity in his attitude that had as its fundamental cause, as much as anything else, her failure to meet him at the train that morning, and her remaining to church after Sunday-school.

"What do you know about this business between Lavinia and that young Marley?" he asked. "It seems to have developed rapidly during my absence."

"Oh, Connie has been talking to you, I suppose!" laughed Mrs. Blair. "You know that Connie is apt to be sensational."

Judge Blair eyed his wife narrowly. Connie was his favorite child, though he would not, of

## AN UNNECESSARY OPPOSITION

course, admit as much, and he was ever ready to spring to her defense.

"She has very bright eyes," he said.

"Oh, now, dear," said Mrs. Blair, "don't overestimate this thing. Lavinia's nothing but a child."

"That's just the point. Has the young man been here much?"

"Yes, he was here quite often—several evenings, in fact."

"Humph! He seems to have taken advantage of the sunshine of my absence to make his hay."

"Don't do him an injustice. He didn't meet Lavinia until just about the time you went away."

"Well, we'll see about it," said the judge, darkly.

"Now see here, Will, don't make the matter serious by an unnecessary opposition; don't drive the children into a position where they will consider themselves persecuted lovers."

Mrs. Blair had not until that instant thought of this argument, and she was so pleased with it, as justifying her own course with the children, as she had artfully called them, that she pressed it.

"No, don't do that. Just let them alone. They're as likely as not to outgrow it; that is, if there is



## THE HAPPY AVERAGE.

anything between them to outgrow. They'll probably imagine themselves in love a dozen times before either of them is married."

"Don't talk of marriage!" said the judge, with a little shudder.

Mrs. Blair, who had so well dispelled her own fears, could laugh at her husband's.

"Just let them alone," she said; "or leave it to me."

"Yes," said the judge peevishly, "leave it to you. You'd probably aid and abet them." And then, instantly regretting his ill humor, he added hastily: "You're so kind-hearted."

Mrs. Blair kissed his white hair gently and gave his cheek a little pat.

"You'd better take a nap," she said.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A JUDICIAL DECISION.

The judge refused to take a nap, though when he sat down on the veranda he did take one, lying back in his chair with one of the many sections of the Sunday paper spread over his face. It was from this somewhat undignified posture that he was aroused by a step; he started up hastily.

"I beg your pardon," said the young man, who stood on the steps twirling his straw hat round and round in his hands. The young man went on with an anxious smile:

"This is Judge Blair, I presume? My name is Marley—Glenn Marley."

If Marley had known that there were men then in the Ohio penitentiary serving terms that were longer by years than they would have been had

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

Judge Blair digested his breakfast, or been allowed to finish his afternoon nap, he would have chosen another hour to press his suit. But he had youth's sublime confidence, and its abiding faith in the abstract quality of justice. He had dreaded this moment, but it had forced itself upon his keen conscience as a duty, and when he heard that morning that Judge Blair had returned he resolved to have it out at once.

"May I have a word with you?" he asked, advancing a little.

The judge nodded, but slightly, as if it were necessary for him, as a fattening man advanced in middle life, to conserve his energies. His nod seemed to include not only an assent, however reluctant, but a permission as well, to take the other chair that stood, all ready to rock comfortably, on the veranda. Marley took the chair but he did not rock, nor did he yield himself to it, but sat somewhat tensely on its very edge.

"It's warm this afternoon, isn't it?" he said, trying to keep up his smile. He felt hopeless about it, but the thought, darting through his mind, that Lavinia was near, braced his purpose. The judge sat

## A JUDICIAL DECISION

hunched in his chair, with his short white hair tumbled rather picturesquely, and his chin low in his collar. His lips were set firmly, his brows contracted. He breathed heavily, and on his strong aquiline nose, Marley could see tiny drops of perspiration.

"I have come," said Marley, "to speak to you, Judge Blair, on a matter of, that is, importance. That is, I have come to ask you if I might—ah—pay my addresses to your daughter."

Marley thought this form of putting it rather fine, and he was glad that that much of it, at least, was over. And yet, much as he liked this old-fashioned formula about paying his addresses, he instantly felt its inadequacy, and so nerved himself to do it all over.

"I mean Lavinia," he said hurriedly, as if to correct any error of identification he might have led the judge into. "I want to marry her."

The judge, still breathing heavily, looked at Marley out of his narrowed eyes.

"You know," Marley said, in an explanatory way, "I love her."

He waited then, but the judge was motionless,

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

even to the hand that hung at his side over the arm of his chair, still holding his paper. Now and then, at what seemed to be long, unequal intervals, his eyelids fell slowly in heavy winks.

"How long have you and Lavinia known each other?" he asked finally.

"I met her several weeks ago, out at Captain Carter's. But I did not see her again, that is to speak to her, until about a week ago. In one way I have known her, you might say, but a week; yet I feel that I have known her a long time, always, in fact. I—I—well, I loved her at first sight." Marley dropped his face at this speech, for it seemed that he had made it too sentimental; he had a feeling that the judge so regarded it. He sat and picked at the braids of straw in his hat.

"And have you spoken to her?" asked the judge.

"Oh yes!" said Marley, looking up quickly.

"And she—?"

"She loves me."

The judge closed his eyes as if in pain. Then he stirred, the paper dropped from his fingers, and he drew himself up in his chair, as if to deal with the matter.

## A JUDICIAL DECISION

"How old are you, Mr. Marley?" he inquired.

"I am twenty-two," said Marley, confidently, as if this maturity must incline the judge in his favor. "I cast my first vote for McKinley." He thought this, too, would help matters, and possibly it did.

"You have completed your education?"

"I graduated this summer from the Ohio Wesleyan."

"And what are you doing now, or proposing to do?"

"Just now, I am studying law," he announced. "I'm going to make the law my profession."

Marley looked up with a high faith in this final appeal, but even that did not impress the judge as Marley felt a tribute thus delicately implied should affect him.

"You are reading with a preceptor, I take it?"

"Yes, sir, in Mr. Powell's office."

Judge Blair looked at Marley as if he were deciding what to do with him. After he had looked a while he gazed off across the street, drumming with his finger-tips on the arm of his chair. Presently, without turning, and still gazing abstractedly

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

into the distance—and in that instant Marley remembered that he had seen the judge stare at the ceiling of the court room in exactly the same way while sentencing a culprit—he began to speak.

“Lavinia is yet very young, Mr. Marley,” he said, “with no knowledge of the world, and, perhaps, little of the state of her own mind. You too, are young, very young, and as yet without an occupation. You are, it is true, studying law, but it will be three years before you can be admitted, and many years after that before you can command a practice that would warrant you in marrying. In this day, the outlook for the young lawyer is not encouraging. I do not think I would wish a son of mine to choose that profession; the great changes that have transpired, and are transpiring in our industrial development, have greatly reduced the chances of the young lawyer’s success. The practice in the smaller county-seats, like our own, for instance, has almost entirely vanished. The settlement of titles to real estate, so lucrative a branch of the law in the early days of my own practice, has deprived the later practitioners of that source of revenue; the field of criminal law has become nar-

## A JUDICIAL DECISION

rowed, unremunerative and almost disreputable. The corporation work can be handled by one or two firms in each town, and all that seems to be left is the prosecution of personal injury suits, and that is a work that hardly appeals to the man of dignity and self-respect. The large cities have a wider, I might say, the only field, but there the young lawyer must spend years of the hardest, most unremitting toil before he can come to anything like success."

The judge paused. He had not intended to speak at such length, but the habit of the courts was on him, and once started, he found his own didacticism so pleasing to himself, that it was with reluctance that he paused at all. He might not have stopped when he did, but gone on almost indefinitely, as he did when he delivered what were always spoken of as his beautiful charges to juries, had he not recalled, with something like a pang of resentment, that the happiness of his own, instead of another's child, lay at the bottom of all this. He turned then to face Marley. The young man was sitting there, his eyes wide, and his face long. The color that flamed in it when he first appeared, was now quite gone. It was gray and cold instead.



## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

“You will see, Mr. Marley,” the judge resumed, “that you are hardly in a position to ask for my daughter’s hand. Of course,” the judge allowed a smile to soften somewhat the fixity of his lips, “I appreciate your manliness in coming to me, and I do not want to be understood as making any reflections upon, or in the least questioning, your character, your worth, or the honor of your intentions. But in view of your youth and of Lavinia’s, and in view of your own, as yet, unsettled position in life, you must see how impossible it is that anything like an engagement should subsist between you. I say this because I wish only for Lavinia’s happiness. I may say that I am not unmindful of your happiness, too, and I esteem it my duty to reach the conclusions I have just presented to you.”

“And I—I can not even see her?” stammered Marley, in his despair.

“I have not said that,” the judge said. “I shall always be pleased to extend to you the hospitality of my house, of course; but I would not consider it necessary for you to see her regularly, or intimately, and I certainly would not want you to mo-

## A JUDICIAL DECISION

nopolize her society to the exclusion of other young men with whom she has been in the habit of associating.”

Marley sat there, after this long harangue, with his head downcast. He sat and turned his hat round and round. At last he did look up with an appeal in his eyes, but when he saw that the judge was sitting there, as he had at first, sunk in his chair, breathing heavily and looking at him out of those sluggish eyes, he arose. He stood a moment, and looked off across the street somewhere, anywhere. Then he smote one hand lightly into the other, turned, and said:

“Well—good afternoon, Judge Blair.”

“Good afternoon, Mr. Marley,” the judge replied. He watched Marley go down the walk and out of the gate.

## CHAPTER IX.

### A FILIAL REBUKE

"Father!"

Judge Blair turned and saw Lavinia standing in the wide front door. Her face was red, her eyes were flashing, her arms hung straight and tense at her sides.

The judge stirred uneasily in his chair.

"Oh!" she cried, rigidly clenching her little fists. "What have you done! You have sent him away!"

"Come here, my daughter," he said.

Lavinia moved toward him, halting each moment, then taking a few nervous steps forward. At last she stood before him, challenging, defiant.

"Sit down, Lavinia, and listen," implored the judge.

"You have sent him away!" she repeated. "You were harsh and cruel and unkind to him!"

## A FILIAL REBUKE

"Lavinia!" cried the judge, flushing with the anger parents call by different names. There was now a peremptory quality in his tone. But the girl did not heed him.

"Oh, how could you!" she went on, "how could you! Think how you must have wounded him! You not only reproached him with being poor, but you discouraged him as to his prospects! Do you think I cared for that? Do you think I couldn't have waited? Do you think I can't wait anyhow? What had you when you proposed to mama? You were poor—you had no prospects; you had no more right—"

"Lavinia! Lavinia!" the judge commanded, grasping the arms of his chair in an effort to rise. "You are beside yourself! You don't know what you are saying!"

"And you pretended to be doing it all for my happiness, too! Oh! oh! oh!" Her anger vented itself impotently in these exclamations, and then her mother, white and alarmed, appeared in the doorway behind her.

"Lavinia," she said quietly.

The girl trembled violently, then whirled about,

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE.

pressed her hands to her face, and ran in, brushing by her mother in the doorway. Mrs. Blair glanced after her irresolutely. Then she went to her husband.

"Be calm, dear," she said.

The judge sank back in his chair and looked at her in amazement.

"What has happened?" She drew the empty chair up and sat down in it. She leaned forward and took one of his hands, and pressed it between both of her own. She waited for the judge to speak.

"I hardly know," he began. "I never heard Lavinia break out so."

"You must remember how excited and overwrought she is," Mrs. Blair exclaimed. "You must make allowances."

"I didn't know the girl had such spirit," he continued.

Mrs. Blair smiled rather wanly, and stroked her husband's hand. It was very cold and moist, and it trembled.

"I had no idea it was so serious," he went on, as if summing up the catalogue of his surprises.

## A FILIAL REBUKE

"Tell me how it all came about," said Mrs. Blair.

"Marley was here, first," the judge began. He had to pause, for he seemed to find it difficult to catch his breath. "It was a great surprise to me; it was very painful."

The judge withdrew his hand and wiped his brow. Then he gazed again as he had done before, across the street. Mrs. Blair, though eying him closely and with concern, waited patiently.

"I didn't wish to wound him," the judge resumed, speaking as much to himself as to her. "I hope I said nothing harsh; he really was quite manly about it."

He paused again.

"I presume I may have seemed cold, unfeeling, unsympathetic," he went on; and then as if he needed to reassure and justify himself, he added, "but of course it was impossible, utterly impossible."

After another pause, he drew a deep breath, and as if he had already outlined his whole interview with Marley, continued:

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

"And then Lavinia appeared; she must have heard it all, standing there in the hall."

The judge leaned heavily against the back of his big chair; his face was drawn, his wrinkles were deeper than they had been, and he wore an aspect of weariness and pain. His form, too, seemed to have shrunk, and he sat there in an almost helpless mass, limp and inert.

"I am only afraid, dear," Mrs. Blair said quietly, "that we have taken this thing too seriously."

"Possibly," he said. "But it is serious, very serious. I don't know what is to be done."

"We must have patience," Mrs. Blair counseled. "It will require all our delicacy and tact, now."

"Perhaps you had better go in to her," the judge said presently. "Poor little girl; she is passing through the deep waters. And I tried to act only for her interest and happiness."

Mrs. Blair arose.

"She will see that, dear, in time."

"I hope so," said the judge. Mrs. Blair went up to Lavinia's room, and listened for a moment at the closed door. She heard a voice, low and indistinct,

## A FILIAL REBUKE

but she knew it for the voice of Connie, and she could tell from its tone that the little girl was trying in her way to comfort and console her sister. So she stepped away, silently, almost stealthily, going on tiptoe.

The judge sat on the veranda all the afternoon. He scarcely moved, and never once did he pick up the Sunday paper. Now and then he bowed, in his dignified way, to some acquaintance passing in the street. The Chenowiths came out on to their front porch, evidently hot and stupefied from their Sunday afternoon naps and ready now for the cool refreshment of the evening breeze they could usually rely on in Macochee with the coming of the evening. The judge bowed to them, and he tried to put into his bow an indolent unconcern, lest the Chenowiths should penetrate his manner and discover the trouble that lay on his heart. The Chenowiths had gone to the end of their porch, and the judge could hear their laughter. He thought it strange and unnatural that any one should laugh.

He decided that he would review this whole affair of Lavinia's love calmly and judicially. He went back to the beginning of Marley's visit, trying



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to see wherein he himself had been in the wrong, then he went over the hot scene with Lavinia. He could not recover from his surprise at this; that Lavinia, who was usually so gentle, so mild, so unselfish, should have given way to such anger was incomprehensible. He had always said that she had her mother's disposition. He could see her, all the time, distinctly, as she had stood there, in a rage he had never known her to indulge before, and yet, as he looked at the image of her that was in his mind, and recalled certain expressions, certain attitudes, certain tones of voice, it came over him all at once that she was exactly as her mother had been at her age, though he could not reconcile Lavinia's mood with the resemblance. Then he went back to his own days of courtship, with their emotions, their uncertainties, their doubts and illusions. They seemed a long way off.

He was trying to think calmly and logically, but he found that he could not then control his mind, for suddenly he saw Lavinia as a little girl, with her mother kneeling before her, shaking out and straightening her starched frock. And with this thought came the revelation, sudden, irresist-

## A FILIAL REBUKE

ible, that Lavinia was no longer a child as, with the habit of the happy years, he had thought of her, up to that very afternoon, in fact, until an hour ago, and he bowed before the changes that hour had wrought. He accepted the conviction now that he himself had grown old. He forgot his purpose to probe to its first cause this unhappiness that had come to him; he saw that what he mourned was the loss of a child, the loss of his own youth.

He glanced across at the Chenowiths again, and they seemed remote from him, of another generation in fact, though but a few moments before he had looked on them as contemporaries. And then suddenly there came to him the fear that Mr. Chenowith might run over to chat with him, as was his habit, and the judge hastily rose, and almost surreptitiously went off the end of the porch and around into the side yard. Under the new impression of age that he had grown into, he walked slowly, with a senile stoop, and dragged his feet as he went. He wandered about in the yard for a long while, looking at the shrubs and bushes and trees he had planted himself so long ago, when he

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

was young. It occurred to him that here in this garden he would potter around, and pass his declining years.

He remained in the yard until his wife came to call him in to the supper she had prepared, in the Sunday evening absence of the hired girl, and with an effort he brought himself back from the future to the present.

"How is she?"

"Oh, she's all right," said Mrs. Blair, in her usual cheery tone. "I didn't go to her, I thought it best to leave her alone."

The judge looked at his wife, with her rosy face, and her full figure still youthful in the simple summer gown she wore. He looked at her curiously, wondering why it was she seemed so young; a width of years seemed all at once to separate them. Mrs. Blair noted this look of her husband's. She noted it with pity for him; he looked older to her.

"I think it would be nice for you to take Lavinia with you when you go to Put-in-Bay to the Bar Association meeting," she said.

It seemed strange and anomalous to Judge

## A FILIAL REBUKE

Blair that he should still be attending Bar Association meetings.

"I'll see," he said; and then he qualified, "if I go."

"If you go?" his wife exclaimed. "Why, you're down for a paper!"

"So I am," said the judge.

They turned toward the house, and the judge took his wife's arm, leaning rather heavily on it.

"Will!" she said, after they had gone a few steps in this fashion. "What is the matter with you! You walk like an old man!"

She shook his arm off, and said:

"Hurry up now. The coffee will be getting cold."

Indoors, they passed Connie going through the hall; she had just come down the stairs, and the sight of her girlish figure, and her short skirts just sweeping the tops of her shoes, gladdened the judge's heart, and he smiled. He could rely on Connie, anyway, for sympathy. But the girl gave him a sharp reproachful stare from her dark eyes, and the judge felt utterly deserted.

Lavinia did not come down to her supper,

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though her mother, knowing she would want it later, kept the coffee warm on the back of the kitchen stove. Chad had gone away with one of the Weston boys. So the three, the judge, Mrs. Blair and Connie, ate their supper alone.

After supper, Mrs. Blair and Connie went immediately to Lavinia and the judge had a sense of exclusion from the mysteries that were enacting up there, an exclusion that seemed to proceed from his own culpability. He went to his library and tried to read, but he could only sit with his head in his hand, and stare before him. But finally he was aroused from his reveries by a stir in the hall, and glancing up he saw Lavinia in the door. She came straight to him, and said:

“Forgive me, papa, if I was rude and unkind.”

He seized her in his arms, hugging her head against his shoulders, and he said again and again, while stroking her hair clumsily:

“My little girl! My little girl!”

## CHAPTER X.

### PUT-IN-BAY.

The little steamer for the islands rolled out of Sandusky Bay with Lavinia sitting by the forward rail. She had yielded to her father's wishes with an easy complaisance that made him suspicious, and yet, as he stood solicitously by, he was persistent in his determination to realize for her all the delights he had so extravagantly predicted for the journey. He tried to rouse her interest by pointing out Johnson's Island, but it did not possess for her, as the place where the Confederate prisoners were confined during the war, the interest an old soldier was able to discover in it, and though he tried his best, with an effort at entertainment that was well-nigh pathetic, she only smiled wanly.

He left her, after a while, her chin in her hands,

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

looking over into the light green waters, watching the curve of the waves the steamer tossed away from its sharp prow. The lake was in one of its most smiling and happy moods, though they were then at a point where storms easily lash its shallow depths into billows that might satisfy the rage of the North Atlantic. The lighthouse on the rocks at Marblehead had a fascination for Lavinia; it seemed waiting for her humor, and she watched it until the steamer had gone far on toward Kelly's Island, and left the lighthouse behind, a white spot gleaming in the sun.

When they entered the little archipelago of the Wine Islands, with their waters a deeper green than those out in the lake and overcast in strange ways by mysterious shadows and cool weird reflections of the green of the islands all about, Judge Blair came back to her and asked if she had been seasick and how she had enjoyed the little journey. As she met him with her strange perplexing smile, he began to doubt her again; something assured him that she still clung to her purpose of love, and he found himself almost wishing

## PUT-IN-BAY

that she had kept to her defiant temper of the Sunday afternoon that now seemed so far away.

When they had reached Put-in-Bay and bounded on the trolley across the island to the huge hotel, they had their dinner and Lavinia perplexed the judge further by retiring to her room. She said she would rest, though she had persisted all the morning that she was not tired.

As soon as she had closed the door on her father, leaving him in doubt and confusion, she began a long letter to Marley. She described her trip in detail, jealous of every trifle of experience that had befallen her; she told him of the bridal couple she had seen board the train at Clyde, and of the showers of rice that had been thrown by the laughing bridal party, though she omitted the lone father of the bride standing apart on the platform craning his head anxiously for another sight of his daughter, and trying to smile. But she gave him a sense of the romance that had stirred in her at the sight of the lighthouse on its lonely point of rocks and the stone towers that made the wine-cellars on Kelly's Island look like castles.



## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

After supper Lavinia left her father to the pleasure of renewing acquaintance with the lawyers who thronged the lobby, and stole down to the rocks that marked the shelving shore of the island. She saw stately schooners, with white sails spread, and she watched, until its black banner of smoke was but a light wraith, a big propeller towing its convoy of grain barges across the far horizon. This calm serene passing of the life of the lakes soothed her, filled her with a thousand fancies, and stirred her emotions with deep, hidden hints of the mystery of all life. As she sat there and gazed, now and then tears came to her eyes. The waters were spread smoothly before her under the last reflection of the sun, the twilight was coming across the lake; and as the light followed the sun and the darkness crept behind, she looked toward the south in the direction, as she felt, of Macochee, and thought of her home and of her mother, of Connie and of Chad, and then she thought of Glenn.

Far out in the lake a cluster of yellow lights moved swiftly along—one of the big passenger steamers that nightly ply between Detroit and Buffalo, and she read in that moving girdle of

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light new meanings; then suddenly a fear seized her, a fear that was part of the ache in her heart, and she ran into the hotel and up to her room. Then she took up her letter again and poured out all her new sensations, her longings, and her fears in a lengthy postscript. When she had finished, she began to address the envelope; and she wrote on it, with pride:

“Mr. Glenn —”

And then she paused. She did not know whether he spelt his name “Marly,” or “Marley,” or “Marlay.” She tried writing it each way, dozens of times, but the oftener she tested it the less able she was to decide. It was too ridiculous; she became exasperated with herself; then humiliated and ashamed. When she heard her father’s step in the hall, she hastily locked her letter in her little traveling bag. The judge greeted her warmly; he was flushed and happy, and in the highest spirits. During the afternoon he had been meeting lawyers from all over Ohio; the evening boats from Cleveland and Toledo had brought more of them to the island; they were all eminent, respectable, rich, the attorneys of big cor-

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE.

porations. The judges of the Supreme Court and of the Circuit Courts were there, and the excitement had reached its height when the boat from Cleveland brought an associate justice of the United States Supreme Court to deliver the chief address of the meeting.

Judge Blair reveled in meeting all these distinguished men; he enjoyed the flattery in their way of addressing and introducing him. But his conscience smote him when he saw Lavinia. He drew up a chair and sat beside her, holding his cigar at arm's length. It was an excellent cigar, better than he ordinarily smoked, and the thin thread of smoke that wavered up from it filled the room almost instantly with its delicate perfume.

"Did my little girl think her father had deserted her?" he said, speaking of her in the third person, after the affectionate way of parents. "He must pay better attention to her. She must come down and meet the lawyers; they will be delighted; a justice of the Supreme Court has just come on from Washington! She will want to meet him!"

The judge paused and twisted his head about for

## PUT-IN-BAY

a puff at his cigar, and then waited for Lavinia to glow at the prospect. But when she looked at him, and tried to smile again, he saw the glint of tears in her eyes.

"Why come, come, dear!" he said. "What's the matter? Aren't you having a good time? Never mind, when this meeting's over we'll go to Detroit, and maybe up the lakes for a little trip. That'll bring the roses back!"

He pinched her cheeks playfully, but she did not respond; she looked at him pleadingly.

"Why, Lavinia," he cried, "you aren't homesick?"

She winked bravely to stem the flood of tears and then nodded.

"Well!" he said, nonplussed. "You know, dear, we can't—"

The tears were brimming in her blue eyes, and he left his sentence uncompleted to go on:

"So you're homesick, eh? For mama, and Connie?"

She nodded, and he studied her closely for a moment, and then he could not resist the question that all along had been torturing him.

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

“And for—?”

She confirmed his fear, with quick decisive little nods. She got out her handkerchief and hastily brushed her tears away, and then with an effort to control herself, she looked at him and said, as if she were ready to have it all out then:

“Yes, father, I haven’t treated him right. I came away without telling him.”

Judge Blair scowled and turned away, and bit the end of his cigar. Then he sat and studied it. Lavinia waited; she was ready for the final contest. Presently the judge arose.

“Well, dear,” he said. “Well—we’ll see; of course, we can’t go back just yet—I have my address to read to-morrow, and besides, some of the boys are talking of me for president of the Bar Association. And I had thought, I had thought, that a little trip over to Detroit, and maybe up to Mackinac—”

“Father,” said Lavinia, looking at him now calmly, “I don’t want to go to Detroit or up to Mackinac. I’ll do, of course, as you say; I’ll wait until the Bar meeting is over, but I want to go home. You might as well know now, father—

## PUT-IN-BAY

we might as well understand each other—it can be no other way.”

Judge Blair looked at his daughter a moment, and she kept her eyes directly and firmly in his.

“Oh well,” he said with a sigh, “of course, dear, if you say. I’d like to stay until after the election though. Will you?”

“Of course,” she consented.

## CHAPTER XI

### MACOCHEE

Marley had not learned of Lavinia's departure until Monday afternoon; he had the news from Lawrence, who had it from the hackman who had taken Judge Blair and Lavinia to the train; for whenever any of the quality go away from Macochee they always ride to the station in the hack, though at other times they walk without difficulty all over the town. When Marley reached the office, and found Wade Powell, as he usually found him, sitting with his feet on his table, smoking and reading a Cincinnati paper, the lawyer looked up casually, but when he saw Marley's expression he suddenly exclaimed:

"Hello! What's the matter?"

Marley shook his head.

"Something's troubling you," said Powell.

## MACOCHEE

Marley shook his head again, and Powell looked at him as at a witness he was cross-examining.

"I know better," he said.

Marley affected to busy himself at his desk, but after a while, he turned about and said:

"Something is troubling me, Mr. Powell; my—prospects." He had been on the point of confessing his real trouble, but with the very words on his lips, he could not utter them, and so let the conversation take another turn.

"Oh, prospects!" said Powell. "I can tell you all about prospects; I've had more than any man in Gordon County. When I was your age, opinion was unanimous in this community that my prospects were the most numerous and the most brilliant of any one here!"

Powell laughed, a little bitterly.

"If I'd only been prudent enough to die then, Glenn," he went on, "I'd have been mourned as a potential judge of the Supreme Court, senator and president."

"It'll be three years before I can be admitted, won't it?" asked Marley.



## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

"Yes," said Powell; "but that isn't long; and it isn't anything to be admitted."

"Well, it takes time, anyway," said Marley, "and then there's the practice after that—how long will that take?"

"Well, let's see," said Powell, plucking reflectively at the flabby skin that hung between the points of his collar. "Let's see." His brows were twitching humorously. "It's taken me about thirty years—I don't know how much longer it'll take."

Powell smoked on for a few moments, and then added soberly:

"Of course, I had to fool around in politics for about twenty-five years, and save the people."

"Do you think," Marley said, after a moment's silence that paid its own respect to Powell's regrets, "that there's an opening for me here in Macochee?"

"No, Glenn, I'll tell you. There's no use to think of locating in Macochee or any other small town. The business is dead here. It's too bad, but it's so. When I began there was plenty of real estate law to do, and plenty of criminal law, but the land titles are all settled now—"

## MACOCHEE

"That's what Judge Blair said," interrupted Marley.

"So you've been to him, have you?"

Marley blushed.

"Well, not exactly," he said. "I heard him say that."

"Yes," mused Powell. "Well, he feathered his nest pretty well while they were being settled. But as I was saying—the criminal business has died out, or rather, it has changed. The criminals haven't any money any more, that is, the old kind of criminals; the corporations have it all now—if you want to make money, you'll have to have them for clients. Of course, the money still goes to the criminal lawyer just as it used to."

"I like Macochee," said Marley, his spirits falling fast.

"Well, it's a nice old town to live in," Powell assented. "But the devil of it is how're you going to live? Of course, you can study here just as well as anywhere; better than anywhere, in fact; you have plenty of time, and plenty of quiet. But as for locating here—why, it's utterly out of the question for a man who wants to make anything

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

of himself and has to get a living while he's doing it—and I don't know any other kind that ever do make anything out of themselves.”

“I had hoped—” persisted Marley, longing for Powell to relent.

“Oh, I know,” the lawyer replied almost impatiently, “but it's no use, there's nothing in it. No one with ambition can stay here now. The town, like all these old county-seats, is good for nothing but impecunious old age and cemeteries. It was nothing but a country cross-roads before the railroad came, and since then it's been nothing but a water-tank; if it keeps on it'll be nothing but a whistling-post, and the trains won't be bothered to stop at all. Its people are industrious in nothing but gossip, and genuine in nothing but hypocrisy; they are so mean that they hate themselves, and think all the time they're hating each other. Just look at our leading citizen, Brother Dudley, over there in his bank; he owns the whole town, and he thinks he's a bigger man than old Grant. Sundays he sits in his pew with a black coat on, squinting at the preacher out of his sore little eyes, and waiting for him to say something he can get

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the bishop to fire him for, and he calls that religion. Mondays he goes back to his business of skinning farmers and poor widows out of their miserable little pennies, and he calls that business. Does he ever look at a flower or a tree, or turn round in the street at the laugh of a child? He's the kind of man that runs this town, and he makes the rest of the people like it. Well, he don't run me! God! If I'd only had some sense twenty years ago I'd have pulled out and gone to the city and been somebody to-day."

It pained Marley to hear Powell berate Macochee; he had never heard him rage so violently at the town, though he was always sneering at it. To Marley the very name of Macochee meant romance; he liked the name the Indian village had left behind when it vanished; he liked the old high-gabled buildings about the Square; he longed to identify himself with Macochee, to think of it as his home.

"But I'll tell you one thing," Powell went on, his tone suddenly changing to one of angry resolution as he flung his feet heavily to the bare floor and struck his desk a startling blow with his fist,

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

"I'll tell you one thing, I'm through working for nothing; they've got to pay me! I'm going to squeeze the last cent out of them after this, same as old Dudley does, same as old Bill Blair did before he went on the bench; that's what I'm going to do. I'm getting old and I've got to quit running a legal eleemosynary institution."

Powell's eyes flamed, but a shadow fell in the room, and Powell and Marley glanced at the door.

"Well, what do you want?" said Powell.

An old woman, bareheaded in the hurry of a crisis, was on the threshold.

"Oh, Mr. Powell," she began in a wailing voice, "would you come quick!"

"What for?"

"Charlie's in ag'in."

"Got any money?" demanded Powell, in the angry resolution of a moment before. He clenched his fist again on the edge of his table. Marley glanced at him in surprise, and then at the old woman.

The woman hung her head and stammered:

"Well, you know—I hain't just now, but by the

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week's end, when I get the money for my washin'—”

“Oh, that's all right,” said Powell, getting to his feet, “that's all right. We won't talk of that now. I beg your pardon. We'll walk down to the calaboose and see the boy; we can talk it over with him and see what's to be done.”

He picked up his slouch hat and clapped it on his head.

“What's he been doing this time?” he said to the old woman as they went out the door.

Marley watched them as they passed the open window and disappeared. A smile touched his lips an instant, and then he became serious and depressed once more.

He had had no word from Lavinia, and her going away immediately after his scene with Judge Blair confused him. He tried to think it out, but he could reach no conclusion save that it was all at an end. Lavinia's sudden, unexplained departure proved that. And yet he could not, he would not, think that she had changed; no, her father had borne her away—that was it—forcibly and cruelly borne her away. For a long while he

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sat there finding a certain satisfaction in the melancholy that came over him, and then suddenly he was aroused by the boom of the town clock. The heavy notes of the bell rolled across to him, and he counted them—five. It was time to go. And Powell had not returned. It was not surprising; Powell often went out that way and did not come back, and, often, somehow to Marley's chagrin, men and women sat and waited long hours in the dumb patience of the poor and then went away with their woes still burdening them. They must have been used to woes, they carried them so silently.

Marley was walking moodily down Main Street, feeling that he had no part in the bustling happiness of the people going home from their day's work, when, lifting his head, he saw Mrs. Blair in her surrey. Instantly she jerked the horse in toward the curb and beckoned to him.

"Why, Glenn! I'm so glad I met you!" she said, her face rosy with its smile. "I have something for you."

She raised her eyebrows in a significant way and began fumbling in her lap. Presently she

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leaned out of the surrey and pressed something into his hand.

“Just between ourselves, you know!” she said, with the delicious mystery of a secret, and then gathering up her reins, she clucked at her lazy horse.

He looked after her a moment, then at the thick envelope he held in his hand. On it was written in the long Anglican characters of a young girl, these words:

“For Glenn.”



## CHAPTER XII

### A CONDITIONAL SURRENDER

Judge Blair and Lavinia returned home Saturday.

"I guess it's no use," the judge said to Mrs. Blair when she had followed him up stairs, where he had gone to wash off the dust he had accumulated during the six hours the train had consumed in jerking itself from Sandusky to Macochee.

"No, I could see how relieved she was to get home," replied Mrs. Blair, musing idly out of the window. She was not so sure that she was pleased with the result she had done her part to accomplish.

"I guess you were right," the judge said.

"I?" asked Mrs. Blair, suddenly turning round.

"Yes—in saying that it would be best not to dignify it by too much notice. That might only add to its seriousness."

## A CONDITIONAL SURRENDER

Mrs. Blair looked out of the window again.

"Of course," the judge went on presently, "I wouldn't want it considered as an engagement."

"Of course not," Mrs. Blair acquiesced.

"You'd better have a talk with her," he said. She saw that he was seeking his usual retreat in such cases, and she was now determined not to take the responsibility. Spiritually they tossed this responsibility back and forth between them, like a shuttlecock.

"But wouldn't that make it look as if we were taking too much notice of it?"

"Well," the judge said, "I don't know. Do just as you think best."

"Didn't you talk to her about it when you were away?" Mrs. Blair asked.

"M-m yes," the judge said slowly.

"And what did she say?"

"Nothing much, only—"

"Only what?"

"Only that she would not give him up."

"Oh!"

Mrs. Blair waited, and the judge dawdled at his toilet. Some compulsion she could not resist,

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE.

though she tried, distrusting her own weakness, drove Mrs. Blair to speak first, and even then she sought to minimize the effect of her surrender.

"Of course, Will," she said, "I want to be guided by you in this matter. It's really quite serious."

"Oh, well," he said, "you're capable of managing it."

"You said you knew his father, didn't you?" she asked after a while.

"Slightly; why?"

"I was just wishing that we knew more of the family. You know they have not lived in Maccohee long."

"That's true," the judge assented, realizing all that the objection meant.

"And yet," Mrs. Blair reassured him, though she was trying to reassure herself at the same time, "his father is a minister; that ought to count for something."

"Yes, it ought, and still you know they say that ministers' sons are always—"

"But," Mrs. Blair interrupted, as if he were

## A CONDITIONAL SURRENDER

wholly missing the point, "ministers' families always have a standing, I think."

They were silent, then, until Mrs. Blair began:

"I suppose I really ought to call on Mrs. Marley."

"Why?"

"Well, it seems, you know—it seems to me that I ought."

"But wouldn't that—?"

"I considered that, and still, it might seem more so if I didn't, don't you see?"

The judge tried to grasp the attenuated point, and expressed his failure in the sigh with which he stooped to fasten his shoes. Then he drew on his alpaca coat, and just as he was leaving the room, his wife stopped him with:

"But, Will!"

He halted with his hand on the door-knob. For an instant his wife looked at him in pleasure. He was rather handsome, with his white hair combed gravely, his ruddy face fresh from his shaving, and his stiff, white collar about his neck.

"What did you say?" he asked, recalling her from her reverie of him.

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

"Oh!" she said; "only this—maybe he won't feel like coming around here any more. You know you practically sent him away."

The judge gave a little laugh.

"I guess that will work itself out. Anyway I'll leave it to you—or to them."

Still smiling at his own humor, he turned the door-knob, and then hesitated. His smile had vanished.

"She's so young," he said with a regret. "She's so young. How old did you say you were when we were married?"

"Eighteen," Mrs. Blair replied.

"And Lavinia can't be more than—"

"Why, she's twenty," said Mrs. Blair.

"So she is," said the judge. "So she is. But then you—"

Mrs. Blair had come close to him, and stood picking a bit of thread from his shoulder.

"It was different with us, wasn't it, dear?" she said, looking up at him.

He kissed her.

## CHAPTER XIII

### SUMMER

The dust lay thick in Ward Street, sifting its fine powder on the leaves of the cottonwoods that grew at the weedy gutter. The grass in the yard grew long, and the bushes languished in the heat. Judge Blair's beans clambered up their poles and turned white; and Connie's sweet peas grew lush and rank, running, as she complained, mostly to leaves. The house seemed to have withdrawn within itself; its green shutters were closed. In the evening dim figures could be seen on the veranda, and the drone of voices could be heard. At eleven o'clock, the deep siren of the Limited could be heard, as it rounded the curve a mile out of town. After that it was still, and night lay on Macochee, soft, vast, immeasurable. The clock in the Court House tower

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

boomed out the heavy hours. Sometimes the harmonies of the singing negroes were borne over the town.

And to Marley and Lavinia those days, and those evenings of purple shadows and soft brilliant stars, were but the setting of a dream that unfolded new wonders constantly. They were but a part of all life, a part of the glowing summer itself, innocent of the thousand artificial demands man has made on himself. Lavinia went about with a new expression, exalted, expectant; a new dignity had come to her and a new beauty; all at once, suddenly, as it were, character had set its noble mark upon her, and about her slender figure there was the aureola of romance.

"Have you noticed Lavinia?" Mrs. Blair asked her husband.

"No, why?" he said, in the alarm that was ever ready to spring within him.

"She has changed so; she has grown so beautiful!"

One morning the judge saw a spar of light flash from her finger, and he peered anxiously over his glasses.

## SUMMER

"What's that, Lavinia?" he asked, and when she stood at his knee, almost like a little girl again in all but spirit, he took her finger.

"A ring," she said simply.

"What does it mean?"

"Glenn gave it to me."

"Glenn?"

"Yes."

"But I thought there was to be no engagement?" The judge looked up, as if there had been betrayal. But Lavinia only smiled. The judge looked at her a moment, then released her hand.

"I wouldn't wear it where any one could see it," he said.

The summer stretched itself long into September; and then came the still days of fall, moving slowly by in majestic procession. With the first cool air, a new restless energy awoke in Marley. All the summer he had neglected his studies; but now a change was working in him as wonderful as that which autumn was working in the world. He looked back at that happy, self-sufficient summer, and, for an instant, he had a wild, impotent desire to detain it, to hold it, to



## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

keep things just as they were; but the summer was gone, the winter at hand, and he felt all at once the impact of practical life. He faced the future, and for an instant he recoiled.

Lavinia was standing looking up at him. She laid her hand on his shoulder.

"What is it, Glenn?"

"I was just thinking," he said, "that I have a great assurance in asking you to marry me."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, dear, just this: I can't get a practice in Maccochee; I might as well look it in the face now as any time. I have known it all along, but I've kept it from you, and I've tried to keep it from myself. There's no place here for me; everybody says so, your father, Wade Powell, everybody. There's no chance for a young man in the law in these small towns. I've tried to make myself think otherwise. I've tried to make myself believe that after I'd been admitted I could settle down here and get a practice and we could have a little home of our own—but—"

"Can't we?" Lavinia whispered the words, as if

## SUMMER

she were afraid utterance would confirm the fear they imported.

"Well—that's what they all say," Marley insisted.

"But papa's always talking that way," Lavinia protested. "I suppose all old men do. They forget that they were ever young, and I don't see what right they have to destroy your faith, your confidence, or the confidence of any young man!" Lavinia blazed out these words indignantly. It was consoling to Marley to hear them, he liked her passionate partizanship in his cause. He longed for her to go on, and he waited, anxious to be reassured in spite of himself. He could see her face dimly in the starlight, and feel her figure rigid with protest beside him.

"It's simply wicked in them," she said presently. "I don't care what they say. We can and we will!"

"I like to have you put it that way, dear," said Marley. "I like to have you say 'we'!"

She drew more closely to him.

"And you think we can?" he said presently.

"I know it."

"And have a little home, here, in one of these

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quiet streets, with the shade, and the happiness—”

“Yes!”

“And it wouldn’t matter much if we were poor?”

“No!”

“Just at first, you know. I’d work hard, and we could be so happy, so happy, just we two, together!”

“Yes, yes,” she whispered.

“I love Macochee so,” Marley said presently. “I just couldn’t leave it!”

“Don’t! Don’t!” she protested. “Don’t even speak of it!”

## CHAPTER XIV,

### ONE SUNDAY MORNING.

It was Sunday morning and Marley sat in church looking at a shaft of soft light that fell through one of the tall windows. From gazing at the shaft of light, he began to study the symbols in the different windows, the cross and crown, the lamb, the triangle that represented the Trinity, all the Roman symbols that Protestantism still retains in its decorations. Then he counted the pipes in the organ, back and forth, never certain that he had counted them correctly. All about him the people were going through the service, but it had lost all meaning for Marley, because he had been accustomed to it from childhood.

Having been reassured by Lavinia, he felt that he should be happy, yet a strong sense of dissatisfaction, of uncertainty, flowed persistently under

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all his thoughts, belying his heart's assurance of its happiness. When Doctor Marley, advancing to the pulpit, buttoned his coat down before him, pushed aside the vase of flowers the ladies' committee always put in his way, and stood with his strong, expressive hand laid on the open Bible, Marley's thoughts fixed themselves for a moment in the pride and love he had always had for his father. There swept before him hundreds of scenes like this when his father had stood up to preach, and then suddenly he realized that his father had grown old: he was white-haired and in his rugged, smooth-shaven face deep lines were drawn—the lines of a beautiful character.

He remembered something his father had said to the effect that the pulpit was the only place in which inexperienced youth was desired, showing the insincerity of what people call their religion, and then he remembered the ambitions he had dimly felt in his father in his earlier days; it had been predicted that his father would be a bishop. But he was not a bishop, and now in all probability never would be one; he was not politician enough for that. And Marley wondered

## ONE SUNDAY MORNING

whether or not his father could be said to have been successful; he had come to know and to do high things, he had lived a life full of noble sacrifice and the finest faith in humanity and in God; but was this success? He heard his father's voice:

"The text will be found in the third chapter of the Lamentations of Jeremiah."

But Marley never listened to sermons; now and then he caught a phrase, or a period, especially when his father raised his voice, but his thoughts were elsewhere, anywhere—not on the sermon. The men and women sitting in front of him kept shifting constantly, and he grew tired of slipping this way and that and craning his neck in order to see his father. And then the constant fluttering of fans hurt his eyes, and they wandered here and there, each person they lighted on suggesting some new train of thought.

Presently they fell on a girl in a white dress, and in some way she suggested Lavinia. And instantly he felt that he should be perfectly happy when thinking of Lavinia, but, as suddenly, came that subconscious uncertainty, that deep-flowing discontent. He went over his last conversation with

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

Lavinia, in which he had found such assurance, but now away from her he realized that he had lulled himself into a sense of security that was all false; and the conviction that Macochee had no place for him, at least as a lawyer, came back. He tried to put it away from him, and think of something else.

His eyes fell on old Selah Dudley, sitting like all pillars of the church, at the end of his pew. Dudley's back was narrow, and rounded out between the shoulders so that Marley wondered how he could sit comfortably at all; his head was flat and sheer behind, and Marley could see with what care the old banker had plastered the scant hair across his bald poll—the only sign of vanity revealed in him, unless it were in the brown kid gloves he wore. Marley looked at Dudley with the feeling that he was looking at the most successful man in Macochee, and yet he had a troubled sense of the phariseeism that is the essential element of such success. He remembered what Wade Powell had said; immediately he saw Dudley in a new light; the old man sat stolid, patient and brutal, waiting for some heterodoxy, or something that

## ONE SUNDAY MORNING

could be construed as heterodoxy, theological or economic, like a savage with a spear waiting to pierce his prey, and glad when the moment came.

But Marley, seeing the young girl in the white dress, again thought of Lavinia, who would be sitting at that very moment with her father and mother and Connie and Chad over in the Presbyterian church. How long would it be before he could sit there beside her, as her husband? Then with a flash it came to him that they would, in all likelihood, be married in that very church. Instantly he saw the spectators gathered, he saw the pulpit and the chancel-rail hidden in flowers, he saw his father with his ritual in his hands, waiting; and then while the organ played the wedding march, Lavinia coming down the aisle, her eyes lowered under her veil. His heart beat faster, he felt a wave of emotion, joyous, exciting.

But there was much to do before that moment could come—the long days and nights of study; the examination looming like a mountain of difficulties, then months and years of waiting for a practice. He tried to imagine each detail of the coming of a practice, but he could not; he could not conceive



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how it was possible for a practice to come to any one, much less to him. There were many lawyers in Macochee now, and all of them were more or less idle. There was certainly no need of more. Judge Blair and Wade Powell and every one had told him that, and suddenly he felt an impatience with them all, as if they were responsible for the conditions they described; they all conspired against him, men and conditions, making up the elements of a harsh, intractable fate.

And Marley grew bitter against every one in Macochee; they all gossiped about him, they were all determined to drive him away; well, let them; he would go; but he would come back again some day as a great, successful lawyer, looking down on them and their little interests, and they would be filled with envy and respect. But what of Lavinia?

What right had he to ask her to marry him? What right had he to place her in the position he had? He realized it now, clearly, he told himself, for the first time. She had given up all for him. She would go out no more, she had foregone her parties, calls, picnics, dances, everything; in

## ONE SUNDAY MORNING.

her devotion she had estranged her friends. He had given her parents concern, he had placed her in a false, impossible position. He must rescue her from it. But how? By breaking the engagement? He blushed for the thought. By going away quietly, silently, without a word? That would only increase the difficulty of her position. By keeping her waiting, year after year, until he could find a foothold in the world? Even that was unfair.

No, he could not give up Lavinia and he could not go away from Macochee, hence it followed that he must give up the law. He must get some work to do, and at once; something that would pay him enough to support a wife. He began to canvass the possibilities in Macochee. He thought of all the openings; surely there would be something; there were several thousand persons in Macochee, and they lived somehow. He did not wish to give up the law; not that he loved it so, but because he disliked to own himself beaten. But it was necessary; he could suffer this defeat; he could make this sacrifice. There was something almost noble

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

in the attitude, and he derived a kind of morbid consolation from the thought.

His father was closing the Bible—sure sign that the sermon was about to end. There was another prayer, then a hymn, and while the congregation remained standing for the benediction, he heard his father's voice:

“The peace of God which passeth all understanding—”

The words had always comforted him in the sorrows he was constantly imagining, but now they brought no peace.

In another moment the congregation was stirring joyously, in unconscious relief that the sitting was over. The hum of voices assumed a pleasant social air, as friend and acquaintance turned to greet one another. The people moved slowly down the aisle. He caught a glimpse of his father, smiling and happy—happy that his work was done—passing his handkerchief over his reddened brow and bending to take the hands of those who came to speak to him and to congratulate him. Just then Selah Dudley gave his father his hand; the sight pleased Marley; and suddenly an idea came to him.

## CHAPTER XV.

### A SAINT'S ADVICE

ON Monday morning Marley found Dudley at his post in the First National Bank. He halted at the little low gate in the rail that ran round Dudley's desk until Dudley looked up and saw him, and then Marley smiled. Dudley, conceiving it to be the propitiatory smile of the intending borrower, narrowed his eyes as he regarded him.

"Well?" he said.

Marley went in and sat down on the edge of the hard chair that was placed near Dudley.

"I wish to have a little talk with you, Mr. Dudley," he said. He waited then for Dudley to reply, thinking perhaps he would be interested in the son of his pastor. Dudley had turned his chair a little, and seemed to have sunk a little lower in its

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

brown leather cushions, worn to a hard shine during the long years he had sat there. The lower part of him was round and full and heavy, while his shoulders were narrow and sloping, and his chest sunken, as if, from sitting there so many years, his vitals had settled, giving him the figure of a half emptied bag of grain. His legs were thin, and his trousers crept constantly up the legs of the boots he wore; the boots were blackened as far as the ankles, above the ankles they were wrinkled and scuffed to a dirty brown.

Marley noted these details hurriedly, for it was the face of the man that held him. A scant beard, made up of a few harsh, wiry hairs, partly covered the banker's cheeks and chin; his upper lip was clean-shaven, and his hair, scant but still black, was combed forward at the temples, and carefully carried over from one side of his head to the other, ineffectually trying to hide the encroaching baldness. His nose was large; his eyes narrow under his almost barren brows and red at the edges of the lids that lacked lashes.

"What do you want?" said Dudley, never moving, as if to economize his energies, as he econo-

## A SAINT'S ADVICE

mized his words and every other thing of value in his narrow world.

Marley did not know just what reply to make: this was a critical moment to him, and he must make no mistake.

"I came," he began, "to—to ask you for a little advice."

Dudley, at this, settled a little more into his chair, possibly a little more comfortably; he seemed to relax somewhat, and his eyes were not quite so narrow as they had been. But he blinked a moment, and then cautiously asked:

"What about?"

"Well, it's just this," Marley began, smiling persistently; "you see I've begun the study of law; I had intended to be a lawyer."

"We've got plenty o' lawyers," said Dudley.

"That's just the conclusion I have come to, and I was thinking somewhat of making a change. And so I thought I'd come and ask you, that is, your advice."

Dudley, still cautious, made no reply, and Marley almost despaired of getting on easy terms. He began to wish he had not come; he might have

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known this, he said to himself, and his smile and the confidence with which he had come began to leave him. But he must make another effort.

"You see, Mr. Dudley," he said, "I thought, as things are nowadays, I would have to wait years before I could really do anything in the law, and as I have my own way to make in the world, I thought, you know, I might get into something else."

"What, for instance?" asked Dudley.

"Well, I didn't exactly know; I had hardly thought it out,—that's why I came to you, knowing you to be a man of large affairs."

Dudley had an instant's vision of his bank, of his stocks, and of the many farms all over Gordon County on which he held mortgages, but he checked his impulse; these very possessions must be guarded; people envied him them, and while this envy in one way was among the sources of his few joys, it nevertheless gave rise to covetousness which was prohibited by the tenth commandment.

"So you want my advice, eh?" he asked, looking hard at Marley.

"Yes, sir."

## A SAINT'S ADVICE

"And that's all?" he asked suspiciously.

"Well—any suggestions," Marley said.

Dudley still hesitated. He continued to study Marley out of his little eyes. Presently he inquired, as if by way of getting a basis to start on:

"You been to college, ain't you?"

"Yes, sir," Marley answered promptly; "I graduated in June."

"How long was you there?"

"Why," Marley replied in some surprise, "the full four years."

"Four years," Dudley repeated. "How old?"

"Twenty-two."

"Well, that's that much time wasted. If a young man's going to get along these times, and make anything of himself, he has to start early, learn business ways and habits. He's got to begin at the bottom, and feel his way up." The banker was speaking now with a reckless waste of words that was surprising. "The main thing at first is to work; it ain't the money. Now, when I come to Macochee, forty-seven years ago, I hadn't nothing. But I went to work, I was up early, and I went to bed early; I worked hard all day, I 'tended



## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

to business, and I saved my money. That's it, young man, that's the only way—up early, work hard, and save your money." Dudley leaned back in his chair to let Marley contemplate him.

"But what did you work at? At first, I mean."

"Why," said Dudley, as if in surprise, "at anything I could get. I wan't proud; I wan't 'fraid o' work."

Marley leaned forward with his elbows on his knees and began twirling his hat in his hands. Then, thinking the attitude lacking in respect, he sat up again.

"Then, I was careful of my habits," Dudley went on. "I never touched a bit o' tobacco, nor tasted a drop o' liquor in my life."

He paused, and then:

"Do you use tobacco?" he asked.

"Sometimes," Marley hesitated to confess.

"Cigarettes?"

"Now and then."

"Humph! Learned that at college, I suppose." Marley made no reply.

"Well, you've started wrong, young man. That wan't the way I made myself. I never touched a

## A SAINT'S ADVICE

drop of liquor nor tasted tobacco. I worked hard and God prospered me—yes, God prospered me.”

Dudley's voice sank piously.

“Now, I'll tell you.” He seemed to be about to impart the secret of it all. “When I was your age, I embraced religion, and I promised God that if he'd prosper me I'd give a tenth of all I made to the church; a tenth, yes, sir, a full tenth.” The banker paused again as if making a calculation, and a trouble gathered for an instant at his hairless brows, but, as if by an effort, he smoothed them so that they became meek and submissive. And then he went on, as if he had found a species of relief:

“But it was the best bargain I ever made. It paid; yes, it paid; I kep' my word, and the Lord kep' His; He prospered me.”

He had folded his hands, and sat blinking at Marley.

“So my advice to you, young man, is to give up tobacco and all your other bad habits, to be up early in the morning, to work hard, and remember God in all your ways, and He shall direct thy paths.”

Dudley stirred, and moved his swivel chair a

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

little, as if it were time to resume work. But Marley sat there.

“That’s my advice to you, young man,” Dudley repeated, “and it won’t cost you a cent.” He said this generously, at the same time implying a hint of dismissal. Still Marley did not move, and Dudley eyed him in some concern. Marley saw the look and forced a smile.

“I thank you, Mr. Dudley,” he said, “for your advice. I am sure it is good. I was wondering, though,” he went on, with a reluctance that he knew impaired the effect of his words, “if you wouldn’t have something here in your bank for me—”

At this Dudley suddenly seemed to shrink in size. His eyes became small, mere inflamed slits beneath his hairless brows, and he said:

“I thought you said you wanted advice?”

“Well, I did,” Marley explained, “but I thought maybe—”

He did not finish the sentence. He rose and stood, still twirling his hat in his hand. “And you have nothing, you know of nothing?”

Dudley slowly shook his head from side to side,

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once or twice, having resumed his economical habits.

“Good morning,” Marley said, and left.

As he went out, the cashier and the assistant cashier looked at him through the green wire screen. Then they lifted their heads from their tasks cautiously and exchanged surreptitious glances.

## CHAPTER XVI

### LOVE AND A LIVING

Marley was not surprised by the result of his visit to Selah Dudley. He made an effort to convince himself that there was truth in what Dudley had said to him, even if he could not remember exactly what it was that Dudley had said. He tried to put down the instinctive feeling of dislike he had for the old banker; he told himself that such a feeling was unworthy of him, if not unworthy of Dudley, and in thinking the matter over he tried to clear himself of all suspicion of envy or jealousy of Dudley's success. The whole town considered Dudley its leading man, and Marley tried so to consider him; and he tried to consider him in this light because he was a good man and not because he was a rich man, just as the town pretended to do. He wanted to talk about

## LOVE AND A LIVING

Dudley with some one, but he did not want to talk about him with Lavinia, because he felt a shame in his failure with Dudley that he feared Lavinia might share. He did talk with his father about him, but his father did not seem to be interested; he smiled his tolerant smile, but made no comment. And when Marley pressed him for an opinion of Dudley his father said:

“They make broad their phylacteries.”

And that was all.

However, Marley found Wade Powell willing to talk of Selah Dudley, as he was willing to talk of almost anything. Marley did not tell Powell that he had been to Dudley to ask for a position; he merely let it be understood that he had met the old man in the course of the day and talked with him casually.

“By the way,” he asked, as if the thought had just come to him, “how did Selah Dudley make his money?”

“He didn’t make it,” Powell answered.

“He didn’t? Did he inherit it?”

“No.”

“Then how did he get it?”

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"He gathered it."

"Gathered it? I don't know what you mean."

Powell laughed.

"You don't? Well, there's a difference."

"He wasn't in the army, was he?"

"In the army! Great God!" Powell threw into his voice the contempt he could not find the word to express. "You think he'd risk his hide in the army? Well, I should say not! Though he would have been perfectly safe—" Powell said it as a parenthetical afterthought—"no bullet could ever have pierced his hide, and he had no blood to shed."

Powell bit the end from his cigar and spat out the damp little pieces of tobacco viciously.

"No, I'll tell you, Glenn," he said, "he stayed at home and got his start, as he calls it, by skinning the poor. Widows were his big game and he gathered a little pile that has been growing ever since. To-day he owns Gordon County."

"He seems to be a prominent man in the church," ventured Marley.

"He'll be a prominent man in hell," said Powell, angrily. And then he added thoughtfully: "My

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one regret in going there myself is that I'll have to see him every day."

The most curious effect of Marley's visit to Dudley, however, was one he did not observe himself. Having been defeated in his plan to secure a place in the bank, he felt at first, with a certain consolation, that he still had the law to fall back on, and he returned to his studies. But he made little headway; once having decided to give up the law, the decision remained, and his mind was constantly occupied with schemes for securing a foothold in some other occupation. He considered, one after another, every possibility in Macochee, and as fast as he thought of some opening, he went for it, but invariably to find it either no opening at all, or else, if it were an opening, one that closed at his approach. Gradually he gave up his studies altogether, and sat idle, his book before him; but one day Powell said to him:

"Say, Glenn, you're not getting along very fast, are you?"

Marley started, and flushed with a sense of guilt.

"Well, no," he admitted.

"What's the matter, in love?"



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Marley blushed, from another cause this time, though the guilt remained in his face. But Powell instantly was gentle.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "I was just joking, of course; I didn't mean to be inquisitive. You mustn't mind my boorishness."

Marley looked at him gratefully and Powell, to whom any show of affection was confusing, turned away self-consciously. But Marley whirled his chair around toward Powell.

"I am in love," he said. "I've wanted to tell you, but I—you know who she is."

"Lavinia Blair?"

"Yes. And that's what's troubling me," Marley went on. "I want to get married, and I can't. I can't," he repeated, "the law's too slow; I've realized it for a long while, but I tried to keep the fact away, I tried not to see it. But now I have to face it. Why," he said, rising to his feet, "it'll take a thousand years to get a practice in this town, and I'm not even admitted yet."

He walked to and fro, his brows pinched together, his lower lip thrust out, his teeth nipping his upper one. Powell glanced at him, but said

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nothing. He knew human nature, this lawyer, and the fact made every one in the county tremble at the thought of his cross-examinations; sometimes he carried too far his love of laying souls bare, and as often hurt as helped his cause. He never had been able to turn his knowledge to much practical account; in a city he would have had numerous retainers as a trial lawyer, though few as a counselor. In Macochee he was out of place, and he chafed under a semi-consciousness of the fact. He waited, knowing that Marley would burst forth again.

"I'll have to get a job," Marley said at that moment, bitterly, "and go to work; that's all." And then he laughed harshly. "Humph, get a job—that's the biggest job of all. What can I get here in Macochee, I'd like to know?"

He halted and turned suddenly, fiercely, almost menacingly on Powell, as if he were the cause of his predicament.

"I've told you already it's no place for you," said Powell, quietly.

"But where'll I go?" Marley held out his hands

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with a gesture that was pleading, pathetic. Thus he waited for Powell's reply.

Powell smoked thoughtfully for a moment and then began:

"When I was going to the law school in Cincinnati, there was a young fellow in my class—a great friend of mine. He was poor, and I was poor—God! how poor we were!" Powell paused in this retrospect of poverty. "That was why we were such friends,—our poverty gave us a common interest. This fellow came from up in Hardin County; he was tall, lean and gawky, the worst jay you ever saw. When we had graduated, I supposed he would go home, maybe to Kenton—that was his county-seat. When we were bidding each other good-by—I'll never forget the day, it was June, hot as hell; and we had left the old law school in Walnut Street and were standing there by the Tyler-Davidson fountain in Fifth Street. I said, 'Well, we'll see each other once in a while; we won't be far apart.' He looked at me and said, 'I don't know about that.' 'Why?' I asked. 'Well,' he said, 'I'm going to Chicago.' I looked at him in surprise. He was out at the elbows then, and

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had hardly enough money to get home on. Then the ridiculousness of it struck me, and I laughed. 'Why, you'll starve to death there!' I said. He only smiled." Powell paused, to whet Marley's appetite, perhaps, for the foregone dénouement.

"That jay," Powell said, when he had allowed sufficient time to elapse, "that jay I laughed at is Judge Johnson. of the United States Circuit Court."

The story saddened Marley. With his faculty of conceiving a whole drama at once, he caught in an instant the trials Judge Johnson had gone through before he won to his station of ease and honor; he saw the privations, the sacrifices, the hardships, the endless strivings, plottings, schemings; it wearied and depressed him; his frightened mind hung back, clung to the real, the present, the known, found a relief in picturing the seeming security of a man like Wade Powell, in a town where he knew everybody and was known by everybody. He shrank from hearing more of the judge; he wished to stay with his thought in Macochee.

"How *do* young men get a start in places like Macochee?" he asked, and then he added in de-

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spairing argument: "They *do* stay, they *do* get along somehow, they make livings, and raise families; the town grows and does business, the population increases, it doesn't die off."

"Well," said Wade Powell, approaching the problem with the generalities its mystery demanded, "some of them marry rich women, but that industry is about played out now; the fortunes are divided up; some of them, most of them, are content to eke out small livings, clerking in stores and that kind of thing; about the only ones that get ahead any are traders; they barter around, first in one business, then in another; they run a grocery, then sell it out and buy a livery-stable; then they dabble in real estate a while; finally they skin some one out of a farm and then they go on skinning, a little at a time; by the time they're old, people forget their beginnings and they become respectable; then they join the church, like Selah Dudley."

Powell stopped a moment, then he began again.

"The lawyers get along God knows how; the doctors, well, they never starve, for people will get sick, or think they're sick, which is better yet;

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then there are a few preachers who are supported in a poor way by their congregations. When a man fails, he goes into the insurance business."

Powell smoked contemplatively for a few moments.

"Sometimes," he resumed presently, "I feel as if I were tottering on the verge of the insurance business myself."

Marley looked at Powell, who had relapsed into silence, his head lowered, his eyes fixed in the distance, and there was something pathetic in the figure, or would have been, but for the humor that saved every situation for Powell. There was, however, something appealing, and something to inspire affection, too. Marley's gaze recalled Powell, and he glanced up with a smile.

"I reckon you've gathered from my remarks," said Powell, "that I consider success chiefly from a monetary standpoint, but I don't. The main business of life is living, and the trouble with the world is that it is too busy getting ready to live to find the time for life; it has tied itself up with a thousand chains of its own forging and it has had to postpone living from time to time until most

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people have put the beginning of life at the gateway of death; meanwhile they're busy gathering things, like magpies, and those that gather the most are considered the best; they have come to think that people are divided into two classes, good and bad; the good are those who own, the bad those who don't, and the good think their business is to put down the bad. Now, here in Gordon County, we have about everything a man needs; the spring comes and the summer, and the autumn and the winter; the rain falls and the winds blow and the sun shines, and I've noticed that Lighttown gets about as much rain as Main Street, and Gooseville about as much wind as Scioto Street; the sun seems to shine pretty much alike on the niggers loafing in Market Space and on old Selah Dudley and Judge Blair, bowing like Christians to each other in the Square. The trees are the same color wherever they grow, and I don't see any reason why people shouldn't be happy if they'd only let one another be happy. Now, I would have lived, but I didn't have time. I thought when I began that I'd have to do as the rest were doing, get hold of things, and I saw that if I did, I'd have to get

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my share away from them; well, I made a failure of that, being too soft inside someway; that was all right too, but meanwhile I was wasting time, and putting off living—now it's too late."

Marley looked at him in perplexity, not knowing how to take him.

"I know," he said presently. "But what am I going to do? I can live all right, but I have to do better than that; I want to get married."

"Married," mused Powell, "married! Well, I got married."

Marley was interested. He had never heard Powell speak of his wife, and he feared what he was about to say; for that instant Powell's standing in his estimation trembled.

"And that was the only sensible thing I ever did."

Marley felt a great relief.

"But I don't know that I did right by Mary; I didn't do her any good, I reckon; still, she's borne up somehow; I wish I had a sky full of sunlight to pour over her."

Powell walked to his window, and looked across into the Court-House yard where the leaves were



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falling slowly from the Maple-trees. Marley hoped that he would go on, and say more of his wife, but he was silent. Presently he turned about.

"Well, Glenn," he said; "I see you're stuck on staying in Macochee, and I don't blame you; and you want to get married, and that's all right. Maybe I can help you do it."

"How?" said Marley, eagerly.

"I've got a scheme."

"What is it?"

"Well, maybe it'll work, maybe it won't. I'd better wait till I see whether it will or not before I tell you."

He stood and smiled at Marley a moment, and then said: "You wait here."

And he turned and left the office. Marley watched Powell's fine figure as he walked across the street toward the Court House, a great love of the man surging within him. He felt secure and safe; a new warmth spread through him. At the door of the Court House Marley saw him stop and shake hands with Garver, the sheriff. The two talked a moment, then turned and went down toward the big iron gate in Main Street, and dis-

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appeared. Marley waited until noon and then he went home to his dinner. He returned, but Powell did not come back to the office all the afternoon.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE COUNTY FAIR

Marley did not see Wade Powell again for four days; a Sunday intervened, and Powell did not come back to the office until Monday morning. He came in with a solemn air upon him, and a new dignity that made impressive the seriousness with which he set to work at the pile of papers on his desk, as if he were beginning a new week with new resolutions. He was freshly shaved, and his hair had been cut; it was shorter at the sides and, against his rough sun-burnt neck, showed an edge of clean white skin. His newly cropped hair gave him a strange, brisk appearance; his black clothes were brushed, his linen fresh.

He spoke to Marley but a few times and then from the distant altitude of his new dignity. Once

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he sent Marley on an errand to Snider's drug store to buy a large blank book; he said he was going to keep an office docket after that. He worked on his new docket half the morning, then he carried the docket and the bundle of papers over to Marley's table, flung them down and asked Marley if he would not continue the work for him. He explained the system he had devised for keeping a record of his cases; it was intricate and complete, but in many of his cases the numbers and in some instances the names of opposing parties were missing; Powell told Marley to go over to the Court House and get the missing data from the clerk.

"I've got to go out for a while," Powell explained. Then he hurried away; he seemed to be glad to escape from the office and the drudgery of the task he had set for himself.

Powell's absence weighed on Marley; he was lonesome in the deserted office, and found himself wondering just where Powell was at each moment; he pictured him with his companions, Colonel Devlin, Marshall Scarff, Sheriff Garver, old man Brockton and Doc Hall; lately it had been rumored that George Halliday had been admitted

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to the merry group, and that they played poker nightly in a room in the Coleman Block. Then Marley would picture to himself Wade Powell's wife; he had never seen her, but he had an idea of her appearance, formed from no description of her, but created out of his own fancy. He pictured her as a graceful little woman, with a certain droop to her figure; but try as he would, he could not see her face; it was a blur to him, yet it gave somehow a certain expression of sweetness and patience; sometimes, by an effort, he could see her brow, and the hair above it; the hair was dark, and parted in the middle with some gray in its rather heavy mass.

Marley could never discuss Wade Powell with any kind of satisfaction with Lavinia. When he spoke of him, she would smile and affect an interest, but he could detect the affectation, and he could detect, also, a certain distance in her attitude toward Wade Powell or the thought of him, which he ascribed to the influence of Judge Blair's dislike. Marley saw that Lavinia never would accept Wade Powell, and he had ceased to mention him except in a casual manner. For some like

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reason he had ceased to mention Wade Powell at home; he found that he had many views which he could not share with those nearest him, and his inner life at that time was somewhat lonely and aloof.

He had not told Lavinia of Wade Powell's offer of assistance, nor had he spoken of it at home. In those four days he had thought much of it and built countless hopes upon it; he had thought of all the possibilities, and taken a fine delight in examining each one, working it out to its logical end in its effect upon Lavinia and him and upon their fortunes. He was disappointed when Wade Powell failed to refer to the subject again; he would have liked to discuss the disappointment with Lavinia; usually, out of her youthful optimism and faith in the life of which she was so innocent, she could reassure him; but of late he had had so many disappointments and had drawn so heavily on Lavinia's resources of comfort and hope that he had grown wary, almost superstitiously wary, of making any further drafts.

When Monday came and Powell did not renew the subject, nor even say what his scheme had been,

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Marley concluded that Powell had forgotten all about it, and so he relinquished the hope with a sigh, and tried to forget it himself. He took up his studies once more; but he made poor headway; he saw with chagrin that he had not read ten pages of law in as many days, and what he had read he could not remember. When he tried to review it, the words had no meaning for him, nor could he wrest any from them, even though he ground his elbows in the table with the book between them and dug his fists into his hair.

That was the week of the Gordon County fair. For a month every fence along the white pikes in the country had borne the bills, flaming from afar in red ink the date, "Oct. 15—31." There were, too, lithographs everywhere—on boards at the monument, at the Court House, on the town hall, on the covered bridge over Mad River—lithographs picturing the exciting finish of a trotting race, and a sedate concourse of fat cattle. The fair opened Monday, but it was understood that that day would be devoted to preparing and arranging the exhibits; the fair would not begin in earnest until Tuesday; the big day would be Thursday.

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Marley was glad that fair week had come, for the chance of novelty which it offered, and, too, for the excuse it gave him; he would not study that week, but in the general festivity try to forget the problem that so oppressed him. He would have liked to go to the fair every day, but he could not, for the expense, insignificant as it seemed to be to every one else in the county, was not insignificant to him. He went, however, on Wednesday with his father, who, with the love of horses he had inherited from the saddle-bag days of Methodism, recklessly attended the races. Marley thought that this visit would be his last, but on Thursday morning he met Lawrence in the Square.

"Just the man I'm looking for!" said Lawrence.

He was brisk, alert, important, and had an official air which was explained when Marley observed, on the lapel of his coat, the badge of blue ribbon that proclaimed an officer of the fair.

"I have charge of the tickets this year," he said. "Want to go? I'll pass you in."

Marley was glad enough to accept.

"I'll have to go around to the office and tell Powell," he said. "I was away all day yesterday."



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"Oh, nonsense," replied Lawrence, "that won't make any difference; he's been full for two days. This is his big time."

Marley had a pang as he saw with what small seriousness Lawrence regarded his relation to the law; it reflected, doubtless, the common attitude of the community toward him and his efforts.

"I've got to hurry," Lawrence went on; "I've got a rig waiting here; you can ride out with me."

It was one of the incomparable afternoons that autumn brings to Ohio; the retreating sun was flashing in the high, blue sky; the air was fresh and Marley felt it full of energy and hope. Lawrence drove rapidly through the throng of hurrying vehicles that crowded the road to the fair-grounds, stirring up a cloud of dust that covered everything with its white powder.

Lawrence left him at the gate, being too full of business to engage in the weary search for pleasure, and Marley set out alone across the scorched and trampled turf for the grand stand, black with people for the races. He could hear the nervous clamor of the bell in the judges' stand, the notes of the hand-organ at the squeaking merry-go-round,

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the incessant thumping of the bass drum that made its barbaric music for the side-show, and the cries of venders, dominating all the voices of the thousands bent in their silly way on pleasure. Once, calling him back to the real, to the peace of the commonplace, he heard the distant tones of the town clock in the tower that stood, a mile away, above the autumnal trees.

He pressed into the space between the grand stand and the whitewashed fence that surrounded the track; through the palings he could see the stoop-shouldered drivers, bent over the heavily breathing trotters they jogged to and fro; above him, in the grand stand, he could distinguish cries and laughs, now and then complete excited sentences, sometimes voices he knew. All around him the farmers, clumsy in their ready-made clothes and bearing their buggy whips as some insignia of office, solemnly watched the races and talked of horses.

The sense of kinship with the crowd that had unerringly drawn Marley left him the moment he was in the crowd, and a loneliness replaced the sense of kinship. He looked about for some one

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he knew. He began, here and there, to recognize faces, just as he had recognized voices in the din above him; he began to analyze and to classify the crowd, and he laughed somewhat cynically when he saw numbers of politicians going about among the farmers, shaking their hands, greeting them effusively, calling them by their Christian names. Then suddenly he saw Wade Powell. The crowd at the point where Powell stood, nucleated with him as its center; by the way the men were laughing, and by the way Powell was trying not to laugh, Marley knew that he had been telling them one of his stories, and from the self-conscious, guilty expressions on certain of the faces, Marley knew that the story was probably one that should not have been told. Several countrymen hung on the edge of the group, not identifying themselves with it, yet anxious to have a look at Wade Powell, who enjoyed the fame of the county's best criminal lawyer.

When Powell saw Marley he called to him, and when Marley drew near, he introduced him, somehow mysteriously, almost surreptitiously, to the man at his elbow. Powell's face was very red, and

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his eyes were brilliant. The mystery he put into his introduction was but a part of his manner.

"This is Mr. Carman, of Pleasant Grove Township, Glenn," he said, bending over, as if no one should hear the name; and then he added, in a husky whisper: "He's our candidate for county clerk, you know."

Marley saw something strange, forbidding, in Carman's face, but he could not tell what it was. It was a red, sunburnt face, closely shaven, with a short mustache burned by the sun; the smile it wore seemed to be fixed and impersonal. Plainly the man had spent his days out of doors, though, it seemed, not healthfully, for his skin was dry and hardened, and his neck thin and wrinkled; he seemed to have known the hard work and the poor nourishment of a farm. Marley wondered what was the matter with Carman's face. But Powell was drawing them aside.

"Come over here," he was saying, "where we can be alone."

He led them to a corner of the little yard; no one was near; they were quite out of the crowd which was pressing to the whitewashed picket fence, at-

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tracted by the excitement of the race for which the horses were just then scoring.

"Now, Jake," Powell began, speaking to Carman, "this is the young man I was talking to you about."

Carman, still smiling his dry meaningless smile, turned his face half away.

"I reckon," Powell went on, "that I might be able to do you some good, if I took off my coat." Powell spoke with a pride in his own influence; Marley had never known him to come so near to boasting before.

Carman was looking away; and Powell, his own eyes narrowed, was watching him closely. Once he winked at Marley, and Marley was mystified; he did not know what play was going on here; he looked from Carman to Powell, and back to Carman again. There was some strange fascination about Carman; Marley felt a slight relief when he discovered that there was something peculiar about Carman's eyes.

"I haven't said anything to Marley about the matter, Jake," Powell said. "Maybe I'd better

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tell him. Hell! He might not want it—I don't know."

Carman turned suddenly; his face had been in the shadow; now it came into the sunlight, and Marley saw that while the pupil of Carman's right eye contracted suddenly, the pupil of his left eye remained fixed; it was larger than the pupil of the right eye, which had shrunk to a pin-point in the sharp light of the sun. Marley looked closely, the left eye seemed to be swimming in liquid; it almost hurt Marley's eyes to look at it.

"I've been telling Carman, Glenn," Powell was explaining, "that if he is elected—and gets into the Court House—"

Marley looked at Powell expectantly.

"I want him," Powell went on, "to make you his deputy."

Marley saw it all in a flash; this was what Powell had meant that day a fortnight ago; he felt his great affection for Powell glow and warm; Lavinia would appreciate Powell after this. It meant salary, position, a place in which he might complete his law studies at his leisure; it meant a living, a home, marriage, Lavinia!

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He looked all his gratitude at Powell, who smiled appreciatively.

Carman had turned his face away again, he was still smiling, and plucking now at his chin; Marley waited, and Powell finally grew impatient.

“Well, Jake, what do you say?”

Carman waited a moment longer, then slowly turned about. Marley watched him narrowly, he saw the pupil of his right eye contract, the pupil of the watery left eye remained fixed; then, for the first time, Carman looked steadily at Marley and for the first time he spoke.

“Well,” he said, and he stopped to spit out his tobacco, “you know I’m always ready to do a friend a good turn.”

Powell looked Carman over carefully a moment, and then he said,

“All right, Jake.”

Just then there was a rush of hoofs, a shock of excitement, and they heard a loud yell:

“Go!”

And they rushed to the fence of the whitewashed palings.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE ROAD TO MINGO

Lavinia sat rocking quietly back and forth, and stitched away with her colored silks on her tambourine frames, while Marley told her of the fortune Wade Powell had brought them. He told the story briefly, and he tried to tell it simply; he did not comment on Powell's kindness or generosity, but let his deeds speak for themselves in Powell's behalf. When he had done, Marley waited for Lavinia's comment, but she rocked on a moment and then held her tambourine frames at arm's length to study the sweet pea she was making. When she had done so, she dropped her sewing suddenly into her lap, and looking up, said:

"He thinks everything of you, doesn't he?"

"I believe he likes me," Marley said, as modestly as he could put it.



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"Who could help it?"

Lavinia looked at Marley, and he leaned over, and took her hands.

"I am glad you can't, sweetheart," he said.

"Do you know," she went on, "I think it is because you have been kind and good to him—just as you are kind and good to every one. His life is lonely; he is an outcast, almost; no one cares for him, and he appreciates your goodness."

Pity was the utmost feeling she could produce for Wade Powell out of her kindly heart. But Marley, though he could accept her homage to the full without embarrassment, could not acquiesce to this length, and he laughed at her.

"Nonsense, Lavinia," he said. "You have the thing all topsy-turvy. It is Wade Powell who has been kind to me; it is he and not I who is good to every one. He has a heart brimful of the milk of human kindness. You have no idea, and no one has, of the good he does in a thousand little ways. He tries to hide it all; he acts as if he were ashamed of it, but there are hundreds of people in Macochee who worship him, and would be ready to die for him, if it would help him any."

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Don't think he has no friends! He has them by the score—of course, they are all poor; I reckon that's why they are generally unknown."

"But isn't he cruel?"

Marley's eyes widened in astonishment.

"I mean," Lavinia said correctively, "isn't he kind of sarcastic?"

"Well," Marley admitted, "he is that at times. I think he tries to hide his better qualities; I think he tries to cloak his finer nature with a rough garb. Perhaps it is because he is really so sensitive. But he is, to my mind, a truly great man. He is a sort of tribune of the people."

"But, Glenn, what about his drinking?"

"Well, that's the trouble," Marley said, shaking his head. "If he had let liquor alone he'd have been away up."

Lavinia was silent a moment, her brow was knit in little wrinkles.

"Glenn," she said presently, "I have been thinking."

"Well?"

"That with your influence you might reform him—out of his liking for you, don't you know?"

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She raised her blue eyes. He laughed outright, and then took her face between his two hands.

"You dear little thing!" he said, with the patronage of a lover.

Lavinia regained her dignity.

"But couldn't you?" she demanded.

"Why, dear heart," Marley said, "he would think it presumption. I wouldn't dare."

Lavinia shook her head in the hopelessness of the reformer, and took up her tambourine frames again with a sigh.

"It's a pity," she said, relinquishing the subject with the hope, "it's such a pity."

"But you haven't told me what you think of the scheme."

"You know, dear, that whatever you think best I think best."

Marley was disappointed.

"You don't seem to be very enthusiastic over the prospect," he complained. "I thought you'd be glad as I to know that I can at last make a place for myself in the world—and a home and a living for you."

Lavinia looked up.

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"I never had any doubt of that, Glenn," she said simply.

He saw the trust and confidence she had in him, a trust and a confidence he had never felt himself, and had never before been wholly aware of in her. He saw that she had never shared those fears which had so long oppressed him, and into his love there came a devout thankfulness. He felt strong, hopeful, confident, victorious. He had a sudden fancy that it would be like this when they were married; he would sit at his own hearth, with a fire crackling merrily, and the rain and wind beating outside—for the first time he could indulge such a fancy; it allowed him, now that his future was assured, to come up to it and to take hold of it; it became a reality.

The judge was not at home that night. Now and then Marley could hear Mrs. Blair speak a word to Connie and Chad, over their lessons in the sitting-room; school had commenced, and Connie having that year entered the High School had taken on a new dignity, in consequence of which she was treating Chad with a divine patience

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that brought its own peace into the Blair household.

They talked for a long time of their plans. Marley would take his new place in December when the new county clerk went into office, and he told Lavinia all the advantages of the position. It would extend his acquaintance, it would give him a familiarity with court proceedings that otherwise he could not have acquired in years. He meant to study hard, and be admitted to the bar. They could have a little cottage and live simply and economically; he would save part of his salary, and when he hung out his shingle he would have enough money laid by to support them, modestly, until he could establish himself in a practice. He laid it all before her plainly, convincingly. He was charmed with the practicability of the plan, with its conservatism, its common sense. They might as well be married.

"Can't we?" he asked. He trembled as he asked; his happiness had never come so close before.

Lavinia dropped her embroidery frames into her

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lap and looked up at him. The question in her eyes was almost born of fear.

"Right away?" exclaimed Lavinia.

"Well, almost right away," Marley answered. "Sometime this winter, anyway."

"This winter! So soon?"

"So soon!" Marley repeated her words, almost in mockery.

"But we mustn't be married in the winter," she said, "we've always planned to be married in June—our month, you know."

"What's the use of waiting?"

"But papa and mama—"

This quick rushing to the parental cover, this clinging to the habit of years struck a jealousy through Marley's heart. His face fell and he looked hurt.

"Can't we, dear?" he pleaded.

Lavinia looked at him, and she said shyly:

"If you say so, Glenn."

They were solemn in their joy and made their plans in detail. They would be married quietly, Lavinia said, and at home. Doctor Marley would

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perform the ceremony, and Marley was touched by this recognition of his father.

The fall worked a new energy in Marley, and, with the assurance that his labors were now soon to bear fruit, he found that he could study better than ever before. He worked faithfully over his books every morning, and he worked so hard that he felt himself entitled to a portion of each afternoon. He would leave the office at four o'clock. Lavinia would be waiting for him, and they would try to get out of sight before Connie returned from school. She might be expected any moment to come slowly down Ward Street entwined with one of her school-girl friends. They did not like, somehow, to meet Connie. The smile she gave them was apt to be disconcerting. They met smiles in the faces of others they encountered in their walks, but they were of a quality more kindly than Connie's smile.

They had walked one afternoon to the edge of town where Ward Street climbed a hill and became the road to Mingo. At their feet lay the little fields, in the distance they could see a man plowing with two white horses; off to the right

## THE ROAD TO MINGO

lay the water-works pond, gleaming in the afternoon sun.

"What are you thinking of?" Marley said.

"I was thinking that it would be nice to live in the country."

"I was thinking that very thing myself!" exclaimed Marley. Their eyes met, and they thrilled over this unity in their thoughts. It was marvelous to them, mysterious, prophetic.

"Some day I could buy a farm," Marley said; "out that way."

"Yes," Lavinia replied, "away off there, beyond those low trees. Do you see?"

She pointed, but Marley did not look in the direction of the trees; he looked at her finger. It was so small, so round, so white. He bent forward, and kissed the finger.

"Oh, but you must look where I'm pointing," said Lavinia.

They drew closely together. Marley took Lavinia's hand and they stood long in silence.

"We could have a country home there," Marley said after a while, "with a hedge about it and stables and horses and dogs. It would be close to



## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

town; I could go in in the morning and out again in the afternoon."

"And I could drive you in, and then come for you in the afternoon—when court adjourned."

"Oh, I would have a man to drive me," said Marley.

"But couldn't I ride in beside you?"

"Yes; you could sit beside me, on the back seat; we'd have an open carriage."

"A victoria!" exclaimed Lavinia. "It would be the only one in Macochee!"

"Is that what they call them?"

"Victorias?"

"Yes."

"You know, with a low seat behind and a high seat for the driver. You have a green cushion for your feet. You would look so handsome in one, Glenn. You would sit very erect and proud, with your hands on a cane. You would have white hair then."

"We would be old?" he asked in some dismay.

"No, no," said Lavinia, trying to reconcile her dreams, "not old exactly. But I dote on white hair. It's so distinguished for a lawyer with a

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country home. Of course we'll have to get old sometime."

"We'll grow old together, dear."

"Yes," she whispered, "and think of the long years of happiness!"

They stood and gazed, looking down the long vista of years that stretched before them as smooth and peaceful as the white road to Mingo.

A subtle change was passing over the face of the road; shadows were stealing toward it, and it was growing gray. The trees that still were green were darkening to a deeper green, but the colors of those that had changed flamed all the brighter. The sun shone more golden on the shocks of corn, the sky was glowing pink in the west, the water-works pond was glistening as the sun's shafts struck it more obliquely. A fine powder hung in the peaceful air.

"How beautiful the fall is!" said Lavinia.

"Yes, I love it," said Marley. "But do you know, dear, that I never liked it before? It always seemed sad to me. But you have taught me to love many things. You don't know all that you have done for me!"

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She stood in her blue dress, with her hands folded before her. Marley looked at her hands, and at her white throat, and at her hair, its brown turned to a golden hue by the clear light; then he looked into her eyes. A sudden emotion, almost religious in its ecstasy, came over him. He bent forward.

"Oh!" he exclaimed. "Do you know how beautiful you are! I worship you!"

"Don't, Glenn," she said, "don't say that!" The reflection of a superstitious fear lay in her eyes.

"Why?" he said defiantly. "It's all true. You are my religion."

"You frighten me," she said.

Marley laughed.

"Why!" he exclaimed, "there's nothing to fear. Isn't our future assured now?"

## CHAPTER XIX

### WAKING

Carman was inducted into office the first Monday in December, quietly, as the *Republican* said, as though it reflected credit on the new county clerk as a man who modestly avoided the demonstration that might have been expected under such circumstances. Marley, in the hope of seeing his own name, eagerly ran his eyes down the few lines that were devoted to the occurrence, but his name was not there, the *Republican's* reporter, as he felt, being a man who lacked a sense of the relative importance of events.

Marley had taken no part in the campaign, though Wade Powell wished him to, and suggested every now and then that he speak at some of the meetings that were being held in the country school-houses. Powell said it would be good practice for

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him in a profession where so much talking has to be done, and he found other reasons why Marley should do this, as that it would extend his acquaintance, and give him a standing with the party; but, though Marley was always promising, he was always postponing; the thought of standing up and speaking to the vast audiences his imagination was able to crowd into a little school-room filled him with fear, and he never could bring himself to consent to any definite time. Besides this, he could not find an evening he was willing to spend away from Lavinia.

When election was over, he expected that he would hear from Carman, but he had no word from him. Several times he was on the point of mentioning the subject to Wade Powell, but somehow, with a reticence for which he reproached himself, he could not bring himself to do it. He watched the papers closely, but he found it quite as hard to find in them any information about Carman as on any other subject, except, possibly, the banal personalities of the town as they related themselves to the coming and going of the trains.

But at last, on the day it had occurred to the

## WAKING

reporter to chronicle the fact that Carman had been inducted into office, the little item struck Marley sadly; he felt a sense of detachment from Carman; he could not altogether realize that intimate relationship to Carman in his new official position that he felt belonged to one who was to be Carman's deputy. In his imagination he saw Carman shambling about in the dingy room where the county clerk kept the records of the court, his knees un-hinging loosely at each step, his shoulders bent, his hands in his trousers pockets, his right eye squinting here and there observantly, the left fixed, impervious to light and shadow, to all that was going on in the world. He wondered if Carman, as he looked about, had been thinking in any wise of him or had seen him as a part of the place where his life was to be lived for the next three years.

Marley read the paper at supper time; in the evening he went to see Lavinia. She too had read the paper.

"I know," she said simply, and he was grateful for her quick intuition. "Have you seen him?"

"No."

"Are you going to?"

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"Would you?"

"Why, certainly, at once."

Marley went to the Court House the first thing in the morning. He feared he might have arrived too early, but Carman had the virtue that goes farther perhaps than any other in the affections and approval of men, he rose early. He had been at his office since long before seven o'clock.

Marley found the new county clerk at his desk, obviously ready for business. The desk was clean, with a cleanness that was rather a barrenness than an order. The ink-wells, the pens, with their shining new steel points, the fresh blotters, all were laid on the clean pad with geometrical exactness. The pigeon holes were empty, but they were all lettered as if the mind of the new county clerk had grappled with the future, come off victorious, and provided for every possible emergency, though there were certain contingencies that had impressed him as "Miscellaneous."

Carman looked up with the obliging expression of the new public official, but Marley's heart instantly sank with a foreboding that told him he might as well turn about then and go. It was

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plain that Carman saw nothing in the call beyond a mere incident of the day's work.

Marley took a chair near Carman's desk. He looked at Carman once, and then looked instantly away; the eye that lacked the power of accommodation was fixed on him, and it made him nervous.

"Do you remember me, Mr. Carman?" asked Marley; and then fearing the reply he hastened to add: "I'm Glenn Marley; Mr. Powell introduced me to you out at the fair-grounds last fall."

"Yes, I remember," said Carman.

"I suppose you know what I came for?"

Carman's right eye widened somewhat in an expression of mild surprise.

"You know," urged Marley, "the clerkship."

"What clerkship was that?"

"Why, don't you know? The chief clerkship, I reckon."

"Here?"

"Why, yes. Don't you remember?"

Carman's right eye wore a puzzled look.

"Don't you remember?"

"Well, you've got me," said Carman, with a little laugh of apology.



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"Why, I understood," Marley went on, "that in the event of your election I was to have a position here."

"What as?"

"Why—as chief deputy."

That right eye of Carman's was fixed on him questioningly.

"Chief deputy?" he said finally. "Here—in my office?"

"Why, yes," said Marley. "Don't you remember?"

The question in the right eye had given way to a surprise that was growing in Carman's mind, and spreading contagiously to a surprise, deeper and more acute, in Marley's mind. The eye had something reproachful in its steady stare. Marley leaned over impulsively.

"Why, surely you haven't forgotten—that day out at the fair-grounds, when Mr. Powell introduced me to you? I understood, I always understood that I was to have the place. I never mentioned it to you afterward, I didn't like to bother you, you know. I waited along, feeling that everything was all right. But when election was over—

## WAKING

and afterward, when you took your office, and I didn't hear anything—I thought I'd come around and see you."

Despite the sinister left eye, Marley leaned close to Carman and waited. Carman was long in bringing himself to speak. Even then he did not seem to be sure of the situation he was dealing with.

"You say you understood you was to have a job under me as chief clerk?"

"Why, yes," replied Marley.

"Who'd you understand it from, me or Wade Powell?"

"Well—" Marley hesitated, "I thought I understood it from you; I certainly understood it from Mr. Powell."

"You say you got the idea from something I said out at the fair-grounds?"

"Yes, sir, at the fair-grounds."

Carman turned away and knitted his brows.

"At the fair-grounds," he said presently, as though talking more to himself than to Marley.

"The fair-grounds, h-m. Yes, I do remember—"

Marley's heart stirred with a little hope.

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

"I do remember seeing you there, and talking to you. But I don't remember making you any promises. Did you ask me?"

"No; Mr. Powell did that."

"And what did I say?"

"Well," Marley answered, "I can't recall your exact words, but I got the impression, and so did Mr. Powell, I'm sure, that it was all right, I—I counted on it."

"Well, say, Glenn," he said; "I'm awfully sorry, honest I am. I remember now, come to think of it, that Wade did say something like that, and maybe I said something to lead you to think I'd do it; I don't say I didn't—I don't just remember. But I reckon you've banked more on what Wade told you than on what I did. Course, I reckon I didn't turn you down—a feller never does that in a campaign, you know. But Wade takes a lot o' things for granted in this life."

He smiled indulgently, as if Powell's weaknesses were commonly known and understood.

"I reckon you relied too much on what Wade told you," Carman went on. His right eye was fixed on Marley, but Marley did not return the look.

## WAKING

He had turned half-way round and thrown his arm over the back of his chair. He looked out the window, his eyes vacant and sad. He was thinking of Lavinia, of their hopes and plans, of the little home that had become almost a reality to them; the trees in the Court-House yard held their gaunt limbs helplessly up against the cold December day; the ugly clouds were hurrying desperately across the sky; he thought of the little law office across the street, with the dusty law-books lying on the table, and the hopelessness of it all overwhelmed him. But there beside him Carman still was speaking:

“It’s like Wade,” he was saying. “I’m sorry, derned if I hain’t.”

Marley scarcely heard him. He was looking ahead. How many years—

“He hadn’t ought to of done it,” Carman was going on; “no, sir, he hadn’t ought.”

How many years, Marley was thinking, would they have to wait now? Would Lavinia be lost with all the rest? Ought he to ask her to wait any longer? But Carman kept on:

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

"I've got all my arrangements made now, you see."

He swept his arm about the office where the few clerks were bending over the big records in which they were copying the pleadings they could not understand. Marley did not see; he saw nothing but the ruin of all his hopes. It was still in there; the atmosphere held the musty odor of a public office; the clock ticked; once a stamping machine clicked sharply as a clerk marked a filing date on some document. And then a great disgust overwhelmed him, a disgust with himself for being so fatuous, so credulous. He had taken so much for granted, he had acted as a child, not as a man, and he felt a hatred for himself, he felt almost like striking himself.

"I guess I've been a fool," he said suddenly, rising from his chair.

"No, you haven't neither," said Carman, "but Wade Powell has; he had no business—"

Marley did not wait to hear Carman finish his sentence. Shame and mortification were the final aspects of his defeat; he put on his hat, drew it down over his eyes and stalked away. Carman

## WAKING

looked at him as he disappeared through the lofty door. The pupil of his right eye widened as he looked, and when Glenn had passed from his sight he turned to his desk, and began to rearrange the tools to which he was so unaccustomed.

## CHAPTER XX

### HEART OF GRACE

Marley sighed in relief when he went up the steps of the Blair house that evening. Somehow he had got through the long, desolate day. He was sore from his great defeat, but the worst, at any rate, was over; the pang had been sharp, but now the pain had been dulled. He had spent the day in the office. Wade Powell had been in and out, but never once had he spoken of the clerkship, and Marley was too deep in humiliation to mention it. His one consolation was in the fact that he had never told any one of his prospect, not even his own mother; it had been a secret which he and Lavinia had shared luxuriously; though, as Marley now looked back on their joy, he realized that what had kept him from telling any one was a prudent skepticism, a lack of faith

## HEART OF GRACE

in the possibility of human happiness, an inherited dread of the calamity that stalks every joy.

Lavinia flung the hall door wide for him before he could ring the bell.

"What is the matter?"

"How did you know anything was?" he asked.

"Why," she exclaimed, "I could tell the minute I heard your step. Tell me—what is it?"

Marley, ever sensitive to atmospheres, instantly felt the peace of the household. The glow from the living-room, a quiet voice speaking a commonplace word now and then, told him that Mrs. Blair was there with Connie and Chad, and he knew the children were at their lessons; he caught the faint odor of a cigar, and he knew that Judge Blair was in his library reading peacefully of the dead and silent past, whose men had left all their troubles in the leaves of printed books; all round him life was flowing on, unconsciously, and normally; the tumult and strife in his own soul were nothing to the world. All this flashed on him in an instant—and there was Lavinia, standing before him, her white brow knit in perplexity.

"Tell me," she was saying, "what it is."



## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

"Well, I don't get the job, that's all."

He felt a momentary savage pleasure in the pain he inflicted, justifying it in the thought that he eased his own suffering by giving it to another. Then as quickly he repented, and felt ashamed.

"Is that all?" she said. She had come close to him, smiling in her sympathy, and then lifting a hand to his forehead.

"Don't do that," she said, as if she would erase the scowl.

When they were seated he gave her the details of his meeting with Carman, and with the recital of his disappointment its sharpness was repeated. He leaned over, his elbows on his knees, and clutched his hair in his fists. For an instant a kind of relief came to Lavinia, a relief that a crisis in her life had been postponed, a crisis from which, instinctively, she had shrunk. Her life could go on for a while as it had always gone on; change, which mortals dread, was delayed. Then in another moment her sympathy went out to him; she was on the floor at his knees, her arms about him.

"Don't, dear, don't," she pleaded. "Why, it is

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nothing. What does it matter? What does anything matter, so long as we have each other?"

She stroked his hair, she called him by all her endearing names. She tried to take his hands from his face, that she might get him to look at her. But he resisted.

"No," he said. "I'm no good; I'm a failure; I'm worse than a failure. I'm a fool, a poor, weak, silly fool."

"Hush, Glenn, hush!" she whispered, as if he were uttering blasphemies. "You must not, you must not!"

She shook him in a kind of fear.

"Look at me!" she said. "Look at me!"

He remained obdurate, slowly shaking his head from side to side.

"Look at me!" Lavinia repeated. "Don't you see—don't you see that—I love you?"

A change came over him, subtle, but distinct. Slowly he raised his head, and then he put his arms about her and held her close, and gradually a comfort stole over him,—a comfort so delicious that he felt himself hardly worthy, because he now saw that all through the day he had had a subcon-

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

sciousness that it would come to him at evening, and that he had somehow exaggerated his own grief in order to make this certain comfort the sweeter when it came.

It seemed to Marley, after he and Lavinia had sat there for a while, that he had come out of some nightmare; sanity returned, things assumed once more their proper proportions and relations to each other. He found himself smiling, if not laughing just yet, and with Lavinia's hope and confidence the future opened to him once more. Now and then, of course, his disappointment would roll over him as a great wave, and once he said ruefully:

"But think of the little home we were going to have!"

"But we're going to have it," Lavinia replied, smiling on him, "we're going to have it, just the same!"

"But we'll have to wait!"

"Well, we're young," said Lavinia, "and it won't be so very long."

"But I wanted it to be in the spring."

"May be it will be, who knows?" Lavinia could

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smile in this reassurance, now that she knew it could not be in the spring.

They discussed their future in all its phases, with the hope that Lavinia could so easily inspire in him; Marley was to keep on with his law studies; there was nothing else now to do—unless something should turn up—there was always that hope.

“And it will, you’ll see,” said Lavinia.

They discussed, too, Carman and Wade Powell. Marley thought that Lavinia might return to her old severity with Powell; when he expected her to do this, he was preparing to defend Powell; when she did not, but was generous with him, and urged Marley to reflect that he had done all he had done out of a spirit of kindness, Marley was disposed to be severe with Powell himself. Carman, they agreed, had acted handsomely; they could not find cause to blame him.

“No,” said Marley, “he treated me all right; I believe he was really sorry for me.”

And then, at the thought of Carman’s having pity for him, his rebellion flamed up again.

“It’s humiliating, that’s what it is. Wade

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

Powell had no business making a monkey of me in that way; though it doesn't take much to make a monkey of me; I had the job almost completed myself, just waiting for some one to come along and put the finishing touches on. And Wade Powell did that!"

Marley spoke in the sardonic humor the wounded and beaten spirit likes to employ in dealing with itself. But Lavinia hushed him.

"You just can not talk that way about yourself, Glenn," she declared with her finest air of ownership. "I won't let you."

"Well, it's so humiliating," he said.

"Why, no, it can't be that," Lavinia argued. "You can not feel humiliated. You have done nothing that need cause you any humiliation. We are the only ones who can humiliate ourselves; nothing but our own actions can humiliate us; no one else can."

Lavinia had a smiling little triumph in her own philosophy, but she quickly compromised it by an inconsistency.

"Besides, no one else knows about it."

"No," Marley agreed thoughtfully, and without

## HEART OF GRACE

noticing her inconsistency. "No one else knows anything about it. We have that to be thankful for, anyway."

## CHAPTER XXI

### CHRISTMAS EVE

Lawrence was arranging for a grand ball in the Odd Fellows' Hall, on Christmas Eve, and he had, as he came around to the office one day to assure Marley, counted him and Lavinia in. Marley, glad enough to close the law-book he was finding more and more irksome, listened to Lawrence's enthusiasm for a while, but said at last:

"I'm afraid I can't go."

"Why not? Lavinia will want to go; she always does."

"I know that," Marley admitted, "but I can't, that's all."

Lawrence looked at him intently for a moment.

"Say, Glenn, what's the matter with you?" he said. "Anything been going wrong lately? You look like you were in the dumps."

## CHRISTMAS EVE

Marley shook his head with a negative gesture that admitted all Lawrence had said.

"You ain't fretting over that job, are you?"

"What job?"

Marley looked up suddenly.

"Why, with Carman."

"How'd you know?"

"Oh, everybody knows about that," Lawrence replied with a light air that added to Marley's gloom; "but what of it? I wouldn't let that cut me up; come out and show yourself a little more! You don't want to keep Lavinia housed up there, away from all the fun that's going on, do you? Mayme and I were talking about it the other night; you and Lavinia haven't been to a thing for months; it isn't right, I tell you."

Marley looked sharply at Lawrence for a minute, and Lawrence marking the resentment in his eyes, hastened on:

"Don't get mad, now; I don't mean anything. I'm only saying it for your good. I think you need a little shaking up, that's all."

"Lavinia can do as she likes," Marley said with dignity. "I shall not hinder her; I never have."



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"Well, don't get sore now, old man; I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. The holidays are here and you want to cut into the game; it's a time to forget your troubles and have a little fun; you've only got one life to live; what's the use of taking it so seriously?"

Marley looked at Lawrence with a genuine envy for an instant, as at a man who never took anything in life very seriously; he looked at the new overcoat Lawrence held over his knee, showing its satin lining; and then, reflecting that Lawrence's father had left with his estate a block of bank stock which had given Lawrence his position in the bank, Marley's impatience with him returned and he said:

"Oh, it's easy enough for you to talk; if you were in my place you might find it different."

"That's all right," Lawrence went on, a smile on his freckled face. "You just come to the party; it'll cost you only five, and Lavinia would like it. I know that. So do you."

Marley did know it; and he felt a new disgust with himself that remained with him long after Lawrence had put on his new overcoat and left. He

## CHRISTMAS EVE

reproached himself bitterly, and he told himself that the best thing he could do would be to go away somewhere, and not tell Lavinia, or anybody.

"I'm only in her way, that's all," he thought as he opened his law-book, and bent it back viciously, so that it would stay open.

Ever since the fiasco of his plans as to a place with Carman, he had been seeking consolation in a new resolution to keep on patiently in the law; but it was a consolation that he had to keep active by a constant contemplation of himself as a young man who was making a brave and determined fight against heavy odds. It was difficult to sustain this heroic attitude in his own eyes and at the same time maintain that modesty which he knew would become him best in the eyes of others. The approach of the holiday season, the visible preparations on every hand and the gay spirits everywhere apparent had isolated him more than ever, and he had felt his alienation complete whenever he went to see Lavinia and found the whole Blair family in an excitement over their own festival. Marley would have liked to make Lavinia handsome gifts, but his debts were already large, relatively, and he

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

rose to heights of self-denial that made him pathetic to himself, when he decided that he could give her nothing. Now that Lawrence was getting up a ball to which he knew Lavinia would like to go, as she had always gone to the balls that were not so frequent in Macochee as Lawrence wished they might be, he felt his humiliation deeper than ever. He put the matter honestly to Lavinia, however, and she said promptly:

“Why, I wouldn’t think of going.”

She looked up at him brightly, and then in an instant she looked down again. She relished the nobility of the attitude she had so promptly taken, but the woman in her prevailed over the saint, and told what a moment before she had determined not to tell:

“I’ve already declined one invitation.”

She saw the look of pain come into Marley’s eyes, and instantly she regretted.

“You have?” he said.

“Why, yes.” She looked at him with her head turned to one side; her face wore an expression he did not like to see.

It was on Marley’s lips to ask who had invited

## CHRISTMAS EVE

her, but his pride would not let him do that; somehow a sense of separation fell suddenly between them. He examined with deep interest the arm of his chair.

"Well," he began presently, "I wouldn't have you stay away on my account, you know." He looked up suddenly. "Please don't stay away, Lavinia. I'd like to have you go."

There was contrition in her voice as she almost flew to reply:

"Why, you dear old thing, it was only George Halliday who asked me; and when I told him I wouldn't go he was actually relieved; he said he didn't want to go himself; he hates our little functions out here, you know, and has ever since he came back from Harvard. I suppose he was used to so much more in Cambridge!" Lavinia had a sneer in her tone, and it took on a shade of irritation as she added: "He asked me only because he was sorry for me."

"Yes, sorry for you," Marley repeated bitterly. "That's another thing I've done for you."

"Please don't, dear," said Lavinia, "don't let yourself get bitter. It'll be all right. We'll spend

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Christmas Eve here at home and have ever so much more fun by ourselves.”

Mrs. Blair told Marley that she wished Lavinia might go to the ball; her father wished it, too. Mrs. Blair told him that she could easily get George Halliday to take her,—their lifelong intimacy with the Hallidays permitted that. Marley assured her that he wished Lavinia to accept Halliday's invitation, but that she would not do so.

“I'd take her myself,” he added, “only I can't dance, and—I have no money. I'd like to have her go, if it would give her pleasure.

“I know you would, you dear boy,” said Mrs. Blair, laying her hand on his shoulder in her affectionate way.

Mrs. Blair urged Lavinia to go, and so did Marley, and when he saw that she was determined not to go, he urged her all the more strongly, because, now that he was sure of her position, he could so much more enjoy his own disinterestedness and magnanimity. They desisted when Lavinia complained that they were making her life miserable.

Though Marley could deny Lavinia the dance, he found, after all, that he could not deny himself

## CHRISTMAS EVE

the distinction of giving her a Christmas present. His heroic attitude gradually broke under the temptation of Hoffman's jewelry store, glittering with its holiday display. Marley already owed Hoffman for Lavinia's ring, but like most of the merchants in Macochee, Hoffman had to do business on an elastic credit, if he wished to do any business at all, and Marley, after many pains of selection, did not have much difficulty in inducing Hoffman to let him have the pearl opera-glasses he finally chose in the despair of thinking of anything better.

The opera-glasses might have atoned for the deprivation of the ball, had Marley been able to think of them with any comfort. The delight Lavinia expressed in a gift she could never use in Macochee, and the enthusiasm with which Connie admired them, made him nervous and guilty. Connie had temporarily foregone her claims to young-ladyhood, and was a child again for a little while. Her excitement and that of Chad should have made any Christmas Eve merry, but it was not a merry Christmas Eve for Marley.

As Lavinia and he sat in the parlor they caught now and then, or imagined they caught, the strains

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

of the orchestra that was playing for the dancers in the Odd Fellows' Hall, and they were both conscious that life would be tolerable for them only when the music should cease and the ball take its place among the things of the past, incapable of further trouble in the earth.

"It's very trying," said Judge Blair to his wife that night. "I wish there was something we could do."

"So do I," his wife acquiesced.

"I don't like to see Lavinia cut off this way from every enjoyment. The strain must be very wearing."

"I suppose it is very wearing with most lovers," said Mrs. Blair. "I don't see how they ever endure it; but they all do."

"Have you talked with her about it?" The judge put his question with a guarded look, and was not surprised when his wife quickly replied:

"Gracious, no. I'd never dare."

"No, I presume not. I don't know who would, unless it might be Connie."

Mrs. Blair was silent for a while in the trouble

## CHRISTMAS EVE

that was all the more serious because they dared not recognize its seriousness, and then she asked:

"Couldn't you help him to something?"

"I don't know what," the judge replied. "There's really no opening in a little town."

"If you were off the bench and back in the practice—"

"Great heavens!" he interrupted her. "Don't mention such a thing!"

"I meant that you might take him in with you."

"I'd be looking around for some one to take me in," the judge said. "I'm glad I haven't the problem to face." He enjoyed for a moment the snug sense he had in his own position and then he sighed.

"He's young, he has that, anyway. He'll work it out somehow, I suppose, though I don't know how. As for us, all we can do is to have patience, and wait."

"Yes, that's all," said Mrs. Blair. "I don't believe in long engagements."

"How long has it been?" he asked.

"Nearly a year now."

"I thought it had been ten."



## THE HAPPY AVERAGE.

Mrs. Blair laughed as she said: "Connie was wishing this morning that he'd marry her and get it over with."

## CHAPTER XXII

### AN ADVERTISEMENT OF DESTINY

The first days of spring contrasted strongly with Marley's mood. Because of some mysterious similarity in the two seasons he found the melancholy suggestion of fall in this spring, just as, with his high-flown hopes, he had found some of the joyous suggestion of spring in the autumn before. But as failure followed failure, he began to feel more and more an alien in Macochee; he had a sense of exile among his own kind, he was tortured by the thought that here, in a world where each man had some work to do and where, as it seemed, all men had suddenly grown happy in that work, there was no work for him to do.

He was young, healthy, and ambitious; he had given years to what he had been taught was a

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necessary preparation, and then suddenly, just as he felt himself ready for life, he found that there was no place in life for him. As he went about seeking employment there was borne in on him a sense of criticism and opposition, and he was depressed and humiliated. By the end of the winter he disliked showing himself anywhere; he no longer stopped in the McBriar House of an afternoon to watch Lawrence and Halliday at the billiards they played so well; he thought he detected a coolness in Lawrence's treatment of him. He felt, or imagined, this coolness in everybody's attitude now, and finally began to suspect it in the Blairs.

"What's the matter?" asked Powell, one morning. "You ain't sick, are you?"

Marley shook his head.

"Well, something ails you. I can see that." He waited for Marley to speak. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"No," said Marley, "thank you. I've just been feeling a little bit blue, that's all."

"What about?"

"Oh, I don't know. I'm kind o' discouraged. It

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seems to me that I'm wasting time; I'm not making any headway and then everybody in town is—"

"I wouldn't mind that," said Powell, divining the trouble at once. "They've had me on the grid-iron for about forty years, and they never get tired of giving it a twist. It doesn't bother me much any more, and I don't see why you should let it bother you, especially as all they say about you is a damn lie."

The speech touched Marley, and he lost himself in an impulse of sympathy for Powell, but he could not put his sympathy before Powell in the way he would like and his mind soon returned to himself.

"I've got to do something," he said. "I wish I knew what."

"Well," said Powell, "you know what I've always told you. I know what I'd do if I were your age. Of course—"

Powell did not finish his sentence. He was looking out the window again, lost in introspection.

Powell's reiteration of his old advice expressed the very thought that had been nebulous in Marley's mind for days, and while he was conscious of

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it, he feared the consciousness, and struggled to prevent it from positing itself. But now that Powell had voiced it for him, he could escape it no longer, and it filled him with a fear. He went about all the day with this fear appalling him; more and more under its perverse influence he felt himself an alien, and the people he met in the street seemed unreal and strange, outlandish persons whom he had never known. They came upon him as ghosts, or if they did something to prove their reality, he seemed to be some ghost himself.

In the afternoon he received a note from Lavinia; she said that she was going that evening with George Halliday to a concert in the Opera House. She did not want to go a bit, she said, but her mother, and especially her father, had urged her to go; arguing that she now went out so seldom that it must do her good, and besides, they had urged her so often that she felt it to be her duty in this instance; she had held out as long as she could, and then had yielded.

Marley tried to look upon the note reasonably; he could see the influence that had compelled Lavinia to go, and he knew he had no right to blame

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her, and yet, try as he would, he could not escape a feeling of bitterness. When he went home at evening his mother instantly noticed his depression, and implored him for the reason. He did not answer for a while, that is, it seemed a while to Mrs. Marley, but at last he said:

"Mother, I've got to leave."

"Leave?" she repeated, pronouncing the word in a hollow note of fear.

"Yes, leave."

"But what for?"

"Well, you know I'm no good; I'm making no headway; there's no place for me here in Macochee; I've got to get out into the world and *make* a place for myself, somewhere."

"But where?"

"I don't know—anywhere."

Marley moved his hand in a wide gesture that included the whole world, and yet was without hope of conquest.

"But you must have some plans—some idea—"

"Well, I've thought of going to Cincinnati; maybe to Chicago."

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"But what will you do?" Mrs. Marley looked at him with pain and alarm.

"Do!" he said, his voice rising almost angrily. "Why, anything I can get to do. Anything, anything, sweeping streets, digging ditches, anything!"

Mrs. Marley looked at her son, sitting there before her with his head bowed in his hands. In her own face were reflected the pain and trouble that darkened his, and yet she felt herself helpless; she vaguely realized that he was engaged in a battle that he must after all fight alone; she could not help him, though she wished that she knew how to impart to him the faith she had that he would win the battle, somehow, in the end.

"Poor boy!" she said at length, rising; "you are not yourself just now. Think it all over and talk to your father about it."

It was the first evening in months that Marley had not spent with Lavinia, and his existence being now so bound up with hers, he found that he could not spend the evening as the other young men in town spent their evenings. However, he went down to the McBriar House and there a long bill hanging on the wall instantly struck his eye. The

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bill announced an excursion to Chicago. It took away his breath; he stood transfixed before it, fascinated and yet repelled; he read it through a dozen times. The cheerful way in which the railroad held out this trip intensified his own gloom; he wondered how he might escape, but there was no way; it was plainly the revelation of his destiny, prophetic, absolute, final, and he bowed before it as to a decree of fate; he knew now that he must go.

As he went home, as he walked the dark streets in the air that was full of the balm of the coming spring, he felt as one to whom a great sorrow had come. He thought of leaving Maccohee, of leaving his father and mother, and then, more than all, of leaving Lavinia, and his throat ached with the pain of parting that, even now, before any of his plans had been made, began to assail him. His plans were nothing now; they had become the merest details; the great decision had been reached, not by him, but for him; the destiny toward which all the lines of his existence for months had been converging, was on him, the moment had arrived, and he had a sense of being the mute and helpless victim of forces that were playing with him, hurry-



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ing him along to a future as dark as the moonless night above him.

He told his father of the excursion, though he gave him no notion of it as an expression of his fate, and he was all the more distressed at the calm way in which his father acquiesced in what he put before him as a decision he would have liked to have appear as less final. His father in his mildness could not object to his trying, and he would provide the money for the experiment. It gave Marley a moment's respite to have his father speak of it as an experiment, for that included the possibility of failure, and hence of his return home, but this meager consolation was immediately dissipated in the surer sense he felt that this was the end—the end of Macochee, the end of home, and the beginning of a new life.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE BREAK

Marley went to Lavinia the next morning, and told her as they sat there on the veranda in the spring sunlight. She looked at him with distress in her wide blue eyes.

"When?" she asked.

"To-night!"

"To-night? Oh Glenn!"

Her eyes had filled with tears, and she was winking hard to keep them back.

"To-night."

She repeated the word over and over again.

"And to think," she managed to say at last, "to think that the last night I should have been away from you! How can I ever forgive myself!"

Her lip trembled, and the tears rolled down her

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cheeks. She drew out her handkerchief and said:  
"Let's go in."

All that day Marley went about faltering over his preparations. Wade Powell was the only one of the few who were interested in him that was enthusiastic over his going, and he praised and congratulated him, and pierced his already sore heart by declaring that he had known all along it was what Marley would be compelled to do. He would give him a letter to his old friend, Judge Johnson, he said; the judge would be a great man for him to know, and Powell sat down at once, with more energy and enterprise than Marley had ever known him to show, and began to elaborate his letter of introduction.

Marley dreaded saying good-by; he wished to shirk it as to Powell as he intended to shirk it in the cases of his few friends; he was to return to the office a last time in the afternoon to get the letter; and then he would bid Powell good-by. He had the day before him, but that thought could give him no comfort. He would see Lavinia again in the afternoon; he would see her once more, for the last time, in the evening, and in the meantime he would

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see his father and his mother, and his home; he had still two meals to eat with them, but it was as if he had already gone; there was no reality in his presence there among them; the blow that fate had decreed had fallen, and all that was to be was then actually in being; all about him the men and women of Macochee were pursuing their ordinary occupations just as if he were not so soon to go away and be of this scene no more; a few hours, and another day, and they would be going on with their concerns just the same, and he would have disappeared out of their lives and out of their memories.

He looked at everything that had been associated with his life, and everything called up some memory,—the little office where he had tried to study law, the Court House, and the blind goddess of justice holding aloft her scales, the familiar Square, the cloaked cavalryman on the monument, every tree, every fence, every brick in the sidewalk somehow called out to him—and he was leaving them all. He looked up and down Main Street, wide and ugly, littered with refuse, ragged with its graceless signs; he thought of the people who had gossiped about him, the people whom he had hated,

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but now he could not find in his heart the satisfaction he had expected in leaving them. He felt tenderly, almost affectionately, toward them all. But it was worse at home. He wandered about the house, looking at every piece of furniture, at every trinket; he went into the woodshed, and the old ax, the old saw, everything he had known for years, wrung his heart; he went to the barn, he looked at the muddy buggy in which he had driven so often with his father; he reproached himself because he had not kept the buggy cleaner for him; he went into the stall and patted the flank of Dolly, finally he put his arms about her warm neck, laid his face against it, and the tears rolled down his cheeks.

One of the preachers that were always dropping in on them was there to dinner, and in the blessing he invoked on the temporalities, as he called them, he prayed with professional unction for the son who was about to leave the old roof-tree, and this made the ordeal harder for them all. Doctor Marley spoke to the preacher of little things that he was to do within the next few days and Marley wondered how he could mention them, for they were to be done at a time when he would be there no more.

## THE BREAK

Because he conceived of life, as all must conceive of it, solely in its relation to himself, he could not imagine life going on in Macochee without him.

The afternoon wore on, he passed his hour with Lavinia; they were to meet then but once again; he returned home, his mother had packed his trunk; it was waiting. He was tender with his mother, and he wondered now, with a wild regret, why he had not always been tender with her; he was tender now with all things; a tenderness suffused his whole being; it seemed as if it might dissolve in tears.

Still he shrank back; there was one thing more to do; he was to go up-town and get his ticket, and the letter to Judge Johnson, and bid Wade Powell good-by. A wild hope leaped in his heart; perhaps—but no, it was irrevocable now. He went, and got his letter, but Powell refused to bid him good-by; he said he would be at the train to see him off. He bought his ticket and went home. Old man Downing had been there with his dray and hauled away his trunk; it was settled. He could only wait and watch the minutes tick by.

It seemed to Marley that all things that evening conspired to accentuate all that he was leaving be-

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hind, and to make the grief of parting more poignant. His mother, who was then in that domestic exigency described by the ladies of Maccohee as being without a girl, had prepared an unusually elaborate supper, and while there was no formal observance of the fact, it was eaten, so far as any of them could eat that evening, under a sense of its significance as a parting ceremonial. They talked, or tried to talk, indifferently of commonplace things, and Doctor Marley even sought to add merriment to their feast by a jocularly that was unusual with him. Marley, who knew his father so well, could easily detect the heavy heart that lay under his father's jokes, and he suffered a keener misery from the pathos of it. Then he would catch his mother looking at him, her eyes deep and sad, and it seemed to him that his heart must burst.

Marley's train was to leave at eleven o'clock; he had arranged to go to Lavinia's and remain with her until ten o'clock; then he was to stop in at his home for his last good-by. Those last two hours with Lavinia were an ordeal; into the first hour they tried to crowd a thousand things they felt they must say, and a thousand things they could only

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suggest; when the clock struck nine, they looked at each other in anguish; they did little after that but mentally count the minutes. The clock ticked loudly, aggressively, until in the soul of each, unconfessed, there was a desire to hasten the moments they felt they would like to stay; the agony was almost beyond endurance; it exhausted them, beat them down, and rendered them powerless to speak. Finally the clock struck the half-hour; they could only sit and look at each other now; at a quarter of ten they began their good-bys.

At ten o'clock Mrs. Blair, Connie and Chad came into the room solemnly, and bade Marley farewell; the judge himself came in after them, his glasses in his hand and the magazine he had been reading, which, as Marley thought with that pang of things going on without him, he would in a few moments be reading again as calmly as ever. He took Marley's hand, and wished him success; for the first time he spoke gently, almost affectionately to him, and although Marley tried to bear himself stoically, the judge's farewell touched him more than all the others.

The shameless children would have liked to re-



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main and see the tragedy to its close, but Mrs. Blair drew them from the room with her. The last moment had come, and Marley held Lavinia in his arms; at last he tore himself from her, and it was over. He looked back from out the darkness; Lavinia was still standing in the doorway; he saw her slender, girlish figure outlined against the hall light behind her; somehow he knew that she was bravely smiling through her tears. She stood there until his footfall sounded loud in the spring night, then the light went out, the door closed as he had heard it close so often, and she was gone.

He saw the light in his father's study as he approached his home, and there came again that torturing sense: the sermon his father then was working on would be preached when he was far away; his mother, as he knew by the light in the sitting-room window, was waiting for him; she had waited there so many nights, and now she was waiting for the last time. She rose at his step, and took him to her arms the minute he entered the door.

"Be brave, dear," he said, stroking her gray hair; "be brave." He was trying so hard to be brave himself, and she was crying. He had not

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often seen her cry. She could not speak for many minutes; she could only pat him on the shoulder where her head lay.

“Remember, my precious boy,” she managed to say at last, “that there’s a strong Arm to lean upon.”

He saw that she was turning now to the great faith that had sustained her in every trial of a life that had known so many trials; and the tears came to his own eyes. He would have left her for a moment but she followed him. He had an impulse he could not resist to torture himself by going over the house again; he went into the dining-room which in the darkness wore an air of waiting for the breakfast they would eat when he was gone; he went to the kitchen and took a drink of water, from the old habit he was now breaking; then he went up stairs and looked into his own room, at the neatly made bed where he was to sleep no more; at last he stood at the door of the study.

He could catch the odor of his father’s cigar, just as he had in standing there so many times before; he pushed the door open and felt the familiar hot, close, smoke-laden atmosphere which his father

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seemed to find so congenial to his studies. Doctor Marley took off his spectacles and pushed his manuscript aside, and Marley felt that he never would forget that picture of the gray head bent in its earnest labors over that worn and littered desk; it was photographed for all time on his memory. His words with his father had always been few; there were no more now.

"Well, father," he said, "I've come to say good-by."

His father pushed back his chair and turned about. He half-rose, then sank back again and took his son's hand.

"Good-by, Glenn," he said. "You'll write?"

"Yes."

"Write often. We'll want to hear."

"Yes, write often," the doctor said. "And take care of yourself."

"I will, father."

"Wait a moment." Doctor Marley was fumbling in his pocket. He drew forth a few dollars.

"Here, Glenn," he said. "I wish it could be more."

There was nothing more to do, or say. They

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went down stairs; Marley's bag was waiting for him in the hall. He kissed his mother again and then again; he shook his father's hand, and then he went.

"Write often," his father called out to him, as he went down the walk. It was all the old man could say.

The door closed, as the door of the Blairs' had closed. Inside Doctor Marley looked at his wife a moment.

"Well," he said, "he's gone."

Mrs. Marley made no answer.

"I suppose," he said, "I ought to have gone to the train with him."

Then he toiled up the stairs to his study and the sermon he was to preach when Glenn was gone.

Marley walked rapidly down Market Street toward the depot; in the dark houses that suddenly had taken on a new significance to him, people were sleeping, people who would awake the next morning in Macochee. He could not escape the torture of this thought; his mind revolved constantly about the mystery of his being still in Macochee, still within calling distance, almost, of Lavinia, of his

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father and mother, of all he loved in life, when in reality they had in an instant become as inaccessible to him as though the long miles of his exile already separated them.

Twenty minutes later, Lavinia, in her room, Mrs. Marley, at her prayers, and Doctor Marley sitting in deep absorption at his desk, heard the sonorous whistle of a locomotive sound ominously over the dark and quiet town.

## CHAPTER XXIV,

### THE GATES OF THE CITY.

It was a relief to Marley when morning came and released him from the reclining chair that had held his form so rigidly all the night. He had not taken a sleeper because he felt himself too poor, and he had somewhere got the false impression that comfort was to be had in the chair car. He had stretched himself in the cruel rack when the porter came through and turned the lights down to the dismal point of gloom, but he had not slept; all through the night the trainmen constantly passed through the car talking with each other in low tones; the train, too, made long, inexplicable stops; he could hear the escape of the weary engine, through his window he could see the lights of some strange town; and then the trainmen would run by outside, swinging their lanterns in the dark-

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE.

ness, and calling to each other, and Marley would fear that something had happened, or else was about to happen, which was worse.

Finally the train would creak on again, as if it were necessary to proceed slowly and cautiously through vague dangers of the night. Through his window he could see the glint of rails, the two yards of gleaming steel that traveled always abreast of him. Toward morning Marley wearily fell asleep, and then the sorrow and heart-ache of his parting from Lavinia and his home distorted themselves in fearful dreams.

When he awoke at last, and looked out on the ugly prairie that had nothing to break its monotony but a few scraggly scrub-oak bushes, and some clumps of stunted trees, the dawn was descending from the gray sky. The car presented a squalid, hideous sight; all about him were stretched the bodies of sleeping passengers, flaccid, inert, having cast aside in utter weariness all sense of decency and shame; the men had pulled off their boots, and sprawled on the chairs, their stockinged feet prominently in view; women lay with open

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mouths, their faces begrimed, their hair in slovenly disarray.

The baby that had been crying in the early part of the night had finally gone to sleep while nursing, and its tired mother slept with it at her breast. The Jewish drummer across the aisle was sleeping in shirt-sleeves; his head had rolled from the little rest on the back of his chair and now lolled off his shoulder, his sallow face turned toward Marley was greasy with perspiration; his closed eyes filled out their blue hemispherical lids, and his cheeks puffed with his intermittent snoring. At times his snoring grew so loud and so troubled that it seemed as if he must choke; he would reach a torturing climax, then suddenly the thick red lips beneath his black mustache would open, his sallow cheeks would collapse, and relief would come.

Marley wished the passengers would wake up and end the indecencies they had tried to hide earlier in the night. Glancing up and down the long car he could recognize none of them as having been there when he had boarded the car at Macochee; those who had got on with him had gone



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short distances, and then got off, breaking the last tie that bound him to his home. He found it impossible now to conceive of the car as having been in Macochee so short a time before.

Presently he saw an old lady sitting up in the remote end of the car; she was winding her thin wisp of gray hair in a little knob at the back of her head. Then, feeling that he might bestir himself, Marley got up and went forward; he washed his face, and tried to escape the discomfort of clothes he had worn all the night by readjusting them. The train was evidently approaching the city; now and then he saw a building, lonely and out of place on the hideous sand-dunes, as if it waited for the city, in the growth it boasted, to catch up with it.

The train ran on; it had reached an ever-widening web of tracks; it passed long lines of freight-cars, stock-cars from the west, empty gondolas that had come with coal from the Hocking Valley; a switch tower swept by, its bell jangling peevishly in alarm; long processions of working-men trooped with their dinner-pails between the tracks. The train stopped, finally, still far from its destination. The air in the car was foul from the feculence of

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all those bodies that had lain in it through the night, and Marley went out on the platform. He could hear the engine wheezing—the only sound to break the silence of the dawn. The cool morning air was grateful to Marley, though it was not the air of the spring they were already having in Macochee. He risked getting down off the platform and looked ahead. Beyond the long train, coated with its black cinders, he saw Chicago, dim through the morning light, lying dark, mysterious and grim under its pall of smoke. He shuddered and went back into the car. After a while the train creaked and strained and pulled on again.

The passengers had begun to stir, and now were hastening to rehabilitate themselves in the eyes of the world; the woman with the baby fastened her dress, the drummer put on his collar and coat, the men drew on their boots, but it was long before they felt themselves presentable again. The women could achieve but half a toilet, and though they were all concerned about their hair, they could not make themselves tidy.

The train was running swiftly, now that it was in the city, where it seemed it should have run more

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slowly; the newsboy came in with the morning papers, followed by the baggage agent with his jingling bunch of brass checks. The porter doffed his white jacket and donned his blue, and waited now for the end of his labors, so near at hand. He made no pretense of brushing his passengers, for those in his charge were plainly not of the kind with tips to bestow.

As the train rushed over unknown streets, Marley caught visions of the crowds blockaded by the crossing gates, street-cars already filled with people, empty trucks going after the great loads under which they would groan all the day; and people, people, people, ready for the new day of toil that had come to the earth.

At last the train drew up under the black shed of the Union Station, and Marley stood with the passengers that huddled at the door of the car. He went out and down; he joined the crowd that passed through the big iron gates into the station; and then he turned and glanced back for one last look at the train that had brought him; only a few hours before it had been in Macochee; a few hours more and it would be there again. In leaving the train

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he felt that he was breaking the last tie that bound him to Macochee, and he would have liked to linger and gaze on it. But a man in a blue uniform, with the official surliness, ordered him not to hold back the crowd. He climbed the steps, went out into Canal Street, ran the gantlet of the cabmen, and was caught up in the crowd and swept across the bridge into Madison Street.

He was in Chicago, and here among these thousands of people, each hurrying along through the sordid crowd to his own task, here in this hideous, cruel city, he must make a place for himself, and gain the foothold from which he could fight his battle for existence in the world.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### LETTERS HOME

"How does she seem since he went away?" asked Judge Blair of his wife two days after Marley had gone. He spoke in his usual habit of deference to his wife's observation, though his own opportunities for observing Lavinia might have been considered as great as hers.

"I haven't noticed any difference in her," said Mrs. Blair, and then she added a qualifying and significant "yet."

"Well," observed the judge, "I presume it's too early. Has she heard from him?"

"She had a letter this morning; that is, I suppose it was from him; she ran to meet the postman, and then went up stairs."

"You didn't mention it to her?"

Mrs. Blair looked at her husband in surprise, and

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he hastened to make amends by acquiescing in the propriety of her conduct, when he said:

“Oh, of course not.”

He seemed to drop the subject then, but that it remained uppermost in his mind was shown later, when he said:

“I think she will be weaned away from him after a while, don't you? That is—if he stays long enough.”

Mrs. Blair was not so hopeful; perhaps, too, in her romantic ideal of devotion, she did not wish Lavinia to be weaned away. But she avoided a direct answer by the suggestion:

“Perhaps he will be weaned away from her.”

This possibility had not occurred to the judge.

“Why, the idea!” he said resentfully. “Do you think him capable of such baseness?”

Mrs. Blair laughed.

“Would you like to think of *your* daughter as fickle, and forgetting a young man who was eating his heart out for her far away in a big city?”

A condition of such mild romantic sorrow might have attracted Mrs. Blair in the abstract, but it could not of course appeal to her when it came thus

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personally. As for the judge, he dismissed the problem, as he had so many times before, with the remark:

“Well, we can only wait and see.”

The letter which Lavinia received from Marley had been written the day he reached Chicago. It was a long letter, conceived largely in a facetious spirit, and he had labored over it far into the night in the little room of the boarding-house he had found in Ohio Street.

“I chose Ohio Street,” he wrote, “because its name reminded me of home. Ohio Street may once have been the street of the well-born, but it has degenerated and it is now the abode of a long row of boarding-places, one of which houses me. My room is a little corner eyrie in the second story, back, and from its one window I get an admirable view of the garbage dump, the atmosphere and certain intensely red bricks which go to make the wall of the house next door. And my landlady, ah, I should have to be a Balzac to describe my landlady! She wears large, vociferous ear-rings, and she says ‘y-e-e-a-a-s’ for yes; just kind o’ rolls it off her tongue as if she didn’t care whether it ever got off

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or not. She is truly a beautiful lady, given much to a scarlet hue of her nasal appendage; also, her molar system is unduly prominent, too much to the fore, as it were. As for form or figure, I'm afraid I couldn't say with truth that she goes in for the sinuous, far from it; she leans more to the elephantine style of feminine architecture. And she has a way of reaching out that is very attractive; probably because of the necessity of reaching for room rent. She bears the air of one bent on no earthly thing, of a continual soaring in quest of the unexpected; there is about her the charm of the intangible, the unknowable.

"The boarding-house itself isn't so bad; I get my room and two meals for three-fifty a week; my noon luncheons I have to take down-town. They have dinner here, you know, in the evening. I haven't seen much of the people in the boarding-house; the men are mostly clerks, and the women have bleached hair. They all looked at me when I went into the dining-room this evening. There is one young man who sits at my table who is in truth a very unwise and immature youth. He is given greatly to the use of words of awful and bizarre



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make-up. For instance, he said something about the jokes they get off in the shows here about Irishmen, but instead of saying jokes, he said 'traversities'! What do you think of that?"

Marley had already described his journey to Chicago in terms similar to those in which he described his boarding-house; of Chicago itself he said:

"It seems that ages ago when the gods, or maybe the demons, were making over plans and specifications of the infernal region, Chicago was mentioned and considered by the committee. When it came to a vote for choice of sites the place that won had only three more votes than Chicago. They didn't locate the brimstone plant here, and from what I can learn Chicago was a candidate for both the plant and the honor. It was a mistake on somebody's part, as Chicago is certainly an ideal place for it."

But the letter discussed mostly the things of Macochee, where Marley's spirit still dwelt. The passages Lavinia most liked, of course, were those in which he declared his love for her; it was the first love-letter she had ever received, and this ten-

## LETTERS HOME

der experience went far to compensate her for the loneliness she felt in his absence.

It grew upon her after she had read her letter many times, that it would be a kindness to take it over and read to Mrs. Marley those parts, at least, that were not personal. It was a hard thing for Lavinia to do; she had a fear of Mrs. Marley; but she felt more and more the kindness of it, and so in the morning she set out. Lavinia was surprised and a little disappointed, when Mrs. Marley told her that she too had received in the same mail a letter from Glenn. It somehow took away from her own act, the more when Mrs. Marley calmly passed her letter over for Lavinia to read.

Lavinia, who had not been able to resist a pang that Marley had written his mother quite as promptly as he had written her, found some consolation in the fact that his letter to his mother was not nearly so long as his letter to her, and it contained, too, the same information; in some instances, identical phrases, as letters do that are written at the same time. She felt that she should be happy in them both, and she wished she could determine which of the letters had been written first.

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After she had read Mrs. Marley's letter, she could not speak for a moment; the letter closed with a description of the sensations it gave Marley to open his trunk and come across the Bible his mother had packed in it. But she controlled herself, and when she had finished reading parts of her own letter to Mrs. Marley, she said:

"Well, he seems to be in good spirits, doesn't he? He writes so amusingly of everything."

Mrs. Marley looked up at Lavinia with a curious smile.

"Why, don't you see?" she said.

"What?" asked Lavinia, glancing in alarm at the two letters which she still held in her lap.

"Why, the poor boy is dying of homesickness; that's what makes him write in that mocking vein."

"Do you think that is so?" Lavinia leaned forward.

"Why, I know it," replied Mrs. Marley, with a little laugh. "He's just like his father."

For a moment Lavinia felt a satisfaction in Marley's loneliness, but she denied the satisfaction when she said:

"He'll get over it, after a while."

## LETTERS HOME

"Not for a long while, I'm afraid," said Mrs. Marley. "Not until some one can be with him."

Lavinia blushed, and before she knew it Mrs. Marley had bent over and kissed her cheek.

"He has a long hard battle before him, my dear," she said, "in a great cruel city. We must help him all we can."

Lavinia hesitated a moment, then she put her arms about Mrs. Marley and drew her down for the kiss which sealed their friendship.

They sat and talked of Marley for a long time, and at last when Lavinia rose to go, she held out to Mrs. Marley the letter her son had written her. She looked at it a moment before handing it to Mrs. Marley.

"Would you like to keep it?" Mrs. Marley asked.

"May I?"

"If you wish. But you must come often; I shall be lonely now, you know, and you must bring his letters and read parts of them. He'll be writing so many more to you than he will to me."

Lavinia received a letter from Marley every day; it was not long before Clemmons, the postman, smiled significantly when, each morning at the

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

sound of his whistle, she ran to meet him at the door. And Lavinia wrote to Marley as regularly herself, sitting at the little desk in her room every night long after the house was dark and still.

The judge could find no hope in the observations Mrs. Blair reported to him.

"She seems to have developed a new idea of constancy," said Mrs. Blair. "She will not allow herself to do a thing, or go to a single place; she will hardly accept any pleasure because he isn't here to share it. I believe she tries not to have a thought that is not of him. She is almost fanatical about it."

"Oh dear!" said the judge. "I thought the nightly calls were a severe strain, but they can not compare to the strain of nightly letters."

"He writes excellent letters, however," Mrs. Blair said. "I wish you could read the one he wrote his mother. A boy who writes like that to his mother—"

"How did you get to see a letter he wrote his mother?" interrupted the judge.

"Lavinia showed it to me."

"Has she been over there?"

## LETTERS HOME

"Yes. Why?"

The judge shook his head gravely, as if the situation were now hopeless, indeed.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE ARMY OF THE UNEMPLOYED

"I am very tired to-night," Marley wrote to Lavinia a day or so later. "I have been making the rounds of the law offices; I have been to all the leading firms, but—here I am, still without a place. I thought I might get a place in one of them where I could finish my law studies, and make enough to live on, meanwhile; I had dreams of working into the firm in time, but they were only dreams, and all my hopes have gone glimmering. The men who are employed in the law offices are already admitted to the bar; most of them are young fellows, but some are old and gray-headed, and the sight of them gave me the blues.

"I did not get to see many of the firm members themselves; their offices are formidable places. There is no office in Macochee like them; they have

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big outer rooms, full of stenographers and clerks and there is a boy at a desk who makes you tell your business before you can get in to see any of the lawyers themselves. They seem to be mighty big, important fellows. Most of them would not see me at all; several said they had no place for me and dismissed me with a kind of pitying smile; one man, when I asked him if he thought there was an opening, said he supposed there ought to be, as one lawyer in Chicago had died of starvation only the day before. But some were kinder; one, whom I shall never forget, took pains to sit down and talk with me a long time, but he was no more encouraging than the others. He said the profession was terribly overcrowded, 'that is,' he corrected himself with a tired smile, 'if you can call it a profession any longer. It is more of a business nowadays and the only ones who get ahead are those who have big corporations for clients. How they all live is a mystery to me!' He thought I had better not undertake it and advised me to go into some business. But then most of them did that.

"But I must tell you of my visit to Judge Johnson. You will remember my telling you of him;



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he was Wade Powell's chum in the law school in Cincinnati, and Mr. Powell had given me a letter to him. I had a hard time seeing him; the hardest of all. When I went into the big stone government building he was holding court, and a lawyer was making an argument before him. I waited till they were all done, and then when the crier had adjourned court—he said 'Oyez, Oyez, Oyez,' instead of the 'Hear ye, hear ye, hear ye' we have in Ohio; it sounded so old and quaint, even if he did say 'Oh yes,' for 'Oyez!' It comes from the old Norman-French, you know; ask your father about it, he'll explain it—I tried to get in to him. I succeeded at last, but it was hard work. He didn't seem glad to see me; he looked at me coldly, and made me feel as if I ought to hurry up and state my business promptly and get away. When I gave him Wade Powell's letter he put on his gold glasses and read it; but—what do you think?—I don't believe he remembered Wade Powell at all! At least he seemed not to. Of course he may have been putting it on. Wouldn't it make Wade Powell mad to know that? I'd give a dollar—and I haven't any to spare either—to see him when he hears that his old

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friend, Judge Johnson of the United States Circuit Court, couldn't remember him! Well, the judge didn't let me detain him long, he looked at his watch a moment, and then he advised me not to try it in Chicago; he said there were too many lawyers here anyhow, and that he thought a young man made a mistake in coming to a city at all.

“‘Why don't you stay in a small town?’ he asked, looking at me sternly over his glasses. ‘Living is cheaper there, and life is much more simple than it is in the cities. I've often wished I had stayed in a little town.’

“I came away, as you can imagine, feeling pretty much cast down and humbled in spirit. There are four thousand lawyers in Chicago; just think of it, almost as many lawyers as there are people in Macochee! As I walked through the crowded streets with men and women rushing along, I wondered how they all lived. What do they do? Where are they all going, and how do they get a place to stand on? As I came across the bridge over to the North Side I felt that there was no place for me here in this great, dirty, ugly city, just as there is no place for me back in peaceful

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Macochee, where every minute of the day I long to be. Anyway, I am sure that there is no place for me here in the law, and I shall have to look for something else. I see so much wretchedness and poverty and squalor; it is in the street everywhere—pale, gaunt men, who look at you out of sick, appealing eyes.

“This morning I saw a sight down-town that filled me with horror; it was noon, and a great crowd of ragged men were waiting in front of the *Daily News* office in Fifth Avenue. They were all standing idly and yet expectantly about; I stood and watched them. Presently, as at some signal, they all rushed for the office door, and then all at once they seemed to be enveloped in a white, rustling cloud. Each one had a newspaper, and they all turned to one page and began to read rapidly; sometimes two or three men bent over the same paper; in another moment they had scattered, going in all directions. Then it flashed upon me: they had been waiting for the noon edition of the paper and the page they had all turned to was the page with the ‘want ads’ on it; they were all looking for jobs! It made me inexpressibly sad. I do not wish to inflict

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my own sorrow upon you, dear heart, but it made me shudder; what if I—but no, the thought is too horrible to mention. And yet I, too, belong to this great army of the unemployed.

“As I write the clock in the steeple of a church a block away chimes the hour of midnight; so you see that I’ve retained my nocturnal habits. When the poets of a coming generation sing of me (as they doubtless will, after my death) their songs will be called Nocturnes.”

That same day Doctor Marley received a letter from his son which Mrs. Marley, though her husband passed it over to her to read, did not show to Lavinia. It ran:

“It’s rather expensive living here, I find; especially for one who belongs to the great army of the unemployed. My contract with my basiliscine landlady calls for two meals a day and a bed at night—also for three-fifty per week in payment of said two meals and bed. My lunches I get down-town; that is, I did get them down-town; for two days I have gone without lunches, and the aforesaid landlady looks reproachfully at me at night when she sees me laying in an extra supply of dinner. I

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don't mind the lack of the lunches, even if she does, but I'll have to pay her in a day or so now. I'm in poor spirits to-night, so can't write well; cause of said low mental temperature, only eighty cents in the world between me, my landlady and ultimate starvation. It's funny how much hungrier a fellow gets as the food supply gets low. A word to the wise, etc.

"What do you think? I met Charlie Davis on the street this morning. He is living here now, working in some big department store. My, it was good to see some one from Macochee! How small the world is, after all!

"How are you all? How is Dolly? Does Smith Johnson still clap his hands at his dog every evening as he comes home, and does the dog run out to meet him as joyously as of yore? And does Hank Delphy still go down-town in his shirt-sleeves? And has Charlie Fouly had any fits in the Square lately? And, father, has mother got a girl yet? Give her an ocean of love and tell her not to work too hard, and to let the heathen shift for themselves a while. They haven't any trusts to monopolize the jobs as yet, and they ought to be

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able to get along. Oh, how I'd like to see you all! Answer all my questions: I propounded numerous ones to you. I don't remember now what all of them were, but I know they were all momentous and had much to do with my well-being, spiritual and physical, not to say financial. And see that the moss doesn't get too thickly overlaid on my memory."

Marley's new life in Chicago, as somewhat vaguely reflected in his letters, impressed those who had a sense of having been left behind in Maccohee, as but a continuation of the life he had led there, that is, it was presented to them as one long, hopeless search for employment. He told of his daily tramps up and down the city, of his dutiful applications for work in every place where the boon of work might be bestowed, and of the unvarying refusals of those in whose hands had been intrusted, by some inscrutable decree of the providence of economics, the right to control the opportunity of labor. It was as if the primal curse of earning his bread were in a fair way to be taken from man, had not the primal necessity of eating his bread continued unabated.

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The routine through which he went each day had begun to weary Marley, and it might have begun to weary his readers in Macochee, had they not all felt their own fortunes somehow bound up with his. He apologized in his nightly letters for the monotony of their recitals, but he hoped it might be condoned as the most realistic portrayal of his life that he could give. He tried at times to give his letters a lighter tone by describing, with a facility that grew with practice, the many incidents that attracted him in a city whose life was all so new and strange to him; he could not help a growing interest in it all, and while Lavinia was probably unconscious of the change, his letters were now less concerned with the things of the life he had left in Macochee, and more and more with the things of the life he had entered upon in Chicago; as on a palimpsest, the old impressions were erased to make way for new ones.

But try as he would to give to his letters a cheer that was far from expressing his own spirit, he could not save them from the despair that was laying hold of him, a despair which finally communicated itself in the declaration that it was now

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no longer with him a question of selecting employment.

“I must take,” he wrote, “whatever I can get, and that will probably be some kind of manual, if not menial, work. Sometimes,” so he let himself go on, “I feel as if I would give up and go back to Macochee, defeated and done for. But I can not come to that yet, though I would like to; oh, how I would like to! But I don’t dare, my pride won’t let me act the part of a coward, though I know I am one at heart. One thing keeps me up and that is the thought of you; I see your face ever before me, and your sweet eyes ever smiling at me—”

Lavinia’s eyes were not smiling as she read this; and she poured out her own grief and sympathy in a long letter that she promptly tore up, to pen in its stead a calmer, braver one, that should hearten him in the struggle which, as she proudly assured him, he was making for her.

Marley’s description of his straits partly prepared Lavinia for the shock of the letter in which he said he had found a job at last, but she was hardly prepared to learn that it was anything so far from her conception of what was due him as a



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job trucking freight for a railroad. The mockery he put into the picture of himself in a blue jumper and overalls could not console her, and she kept the truth from every one, except her mother; she preferred rather that they number Marley still with the army of the unemployed than to count him among those who toiled so desperately with the muscles of their arms and backs. She tried to conceal in encouraging congratulations the chagrin of which she felt she should be ashamed, and she tried to show her appreciation of his droll sarcasms about the preparation his four years of college had given him for the task of trundling barrels of sugar and heaving pianos down from box-cars.

"I'm sure it's honest work," she wrote, "but do be careful, dear, not to hurt yourself in lifting such heavy loads." It was a comfort to remind him that he was not intended to do such work.

There was a relief, however, that she did not dare admit, when he told her three days later that he had lost his job.

"I realize for the first time my importance in the great scheme of things," he wrote. "I was fired because I do not belong to the freight hand-

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lers' union. It took them three days to find this out, and then they threatened to strike if the railroad company did not immediately discharge me. The railroad company, after due consideration, decided to let me out, and—I'm out. It makes me tremble to think of the consequences that would have followed had they decided otherwise. Think of it! The railroad tied up, business at a standstill and the commerce of the nation paralyzed, and all because of Glenn Marley, A. B. It is really encouraging to know that my presence on the earth is actually known to my fellow-mortals; it has at least been discovered that I am alive and in Chicago, even if my diploma is not recognized by Freight Handlers' Union No. 63. And now," he concluded, "as Kipling says, it's 'back to the army again, Sergeant, back to the army again'—the army of the unemployed."

Lavinia was shocked again a day or so later when on opening her letter she met the announcement that he had been offered a job with another railroad as a freight handler.

"But you need not be alarmed," she was reassured to read—though it was not until she thought

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it all over afterward that she began to wonder how he had divined her dislike of his being in such work—"I haughtily declined, and turned them down. You see this road is just now in the throes of a strike, and all their freight handlers are out. Consequently, they have had to employ scabs to do the work of the strikers. They take anybody—that's why they were ready to take me. But as I said, I declined. Somehow, I couldn't bring myself to take a place away from a union man."

Lavinia mistook her satisfaction in Marley's declination of the position for a satisfaction in the nobility of his sacrifice, and in her elation she related the circumstance at dinner. Now that Marley had declined such an employment she felt safe in doing this. But her father did not see it in her light, or at least in Marley's light.

"Humph!" he sneered; "so he sympathizes with unionism, does he? Well, those unions will own the whole earth if they keep on."

"But he says he thought of the wives and children of the union men—"

"Well, but why doesn't he think of the wives and children of the scabs, as he calls them? They have

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as much right to live and work as the union men.”

Lavinia, as an opponent of union labor herself, could not answer this argument, though she felt it her duty to defend Marley. But before she could proceed in his defense, her father, strangely enraged at the mere mention of the policies of the unions, hurried on:

“The union didn’t show any consideration for him when it took his other job away from him.”

Lavinia shot a reproachful glance at her mother, who did not see it because she was shooting a glance more than reproachful at her husband, and it had the effect of silencing and humbling the judge, as all of Lavinia’s arguments, or all of the arguments known to the propaganda of union labor, could not have done.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### A FOOTHOLD

The next letter the postman gave Lavinia began ecstatically:

"I've got a job at last! I'm now working for the C. C. and P. Railroad, in their local freight office, and I'm not trucking freight either, but I'm a clerk—a bill clerk, to be more exact. My duties consist in sitting at a desk and writing out freight bills, for which by some inscrutable design of Providence my study of common carriers and contracts in the law was doubtless intended to prepare me.

"To-day I wrote out a bill for freight to Cook and Jennings, Macochee, Ohio, and you can imagine my sensations. It made me homesick for a while; I wished that by some necromancy I might conceal myself in the bill and go to Macochee with it;

## A FOOTHOLD

I had a notion to write a little word of greeting on the bill, but I didn't; it might have worried old man Cook's brain and he couldn't stand much of a strain of that kind. But I'm getting nearer Macochee every day now. I guess I'm to be a railroad man after all, and some day you'll be proud to tell your friends that I started at the bottom. 'Oh, yes,' you'll be boasting, 'Mr. Marley began as a common freight trucker; and worked his way up to general manager.' Then we'll go back to Macochee in my private car. I can see it standing down by the depot, on the side track close to Market Street, baking in the hot sun, and the little boys from across the tracks will be crowding about it, gaping at the white-jacketed darky who'll be getting the dinner ready. We'll have Jack and Mayme down to dine with us, and your father and mother and Chad and Connie, and my folks, too, and maybe, if you'll let me, Wade Powell. Then, of course, the Macochee people will think better of me; they won't be saying that I'm no good, but instead they'll stand around, in an easy, careless way, and say, 'Oh, yes, I knew Glenn when he was a boy. I always said he'd get up in the world.'

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

“But, ah me, just now I’m a bill clerk at fifty dollars a month, thank you, and glad of the chance to get it; so is my voluptuous landlady glad; she’ll get her board money a little more regularly now.

“I suppose you’ll want to know something about my surroundings. They are not elegant; the office is a big barn of a place, crowded full of desks, where we sit and write from eight in the morning until any hour at night when it occurs to the boss to tell us we can go. Last night it was ten o’clock before the idea struck him. They kindly allow us an hour in which to run out to a restaurant for supper. The windows in the office were washed, so tradition runs, in 1493, the year after Columbus landed. Outside, the freight trains rush by constantly so as to keep the noise going. My boss, whose name is Clark, strikes me as being a sort of fool of an innocuous sort. He is a conscientious ass, but a poor, unfortunate, deluded simpleton. He’s one of those close-fisted reubs whose chief care is the pennies, and whose only interest in life is the C. C. and P. Railroad. He makes his business his own personal affair and the C. C. and P. his god. He lunches down-town and pays

## A FOOTHOLD

twenty cents for his lunch, never more, often fifteen. One of the first things he told me was, now that I had come under his protecting wing, to begin to save money. They have a young man in the office here, whose desk is next to mine, who was born somewhere in Canada, and is always 'a-servin' of her Majesty the Queen,' as Kipling says. He told me with much gusto how he had hung out of the office window last New Year's a Canadian flag. He seemed proud of having done so, and also told me, boasted to me, in fact, that he was going to hang the same flag out of the same window on the Fourth of July. 'Oh, yes, you are!' thinks I. So I got the flag and ripped it into shreds and started it through the waste-basket on a hurried trip to oblivion. *À bas* the Canadian flag! He'll probably get another one, but if I get hold of it, it'll meet the same fate as the first one. Then I have something to think of that'll keep my mind off my horrible fate in being here in Chicago, while I smile in ghoulish glee with a cynical leer overspreading my classic features, at the young man's disapproval of my actions. The rest of the men in the office aren't much to boast of. They're a di-



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luted mixture of Nijni Norgordian and Bill Hoffman the jeweler. I still hate this town; I wish it were buried under seven hundred and thirty feet of Lake Michigan."

Marley's next letter to Lavinia opened thus:

"Extract from the diary of J. H. Anderson, Esq., Canadian, clerk in the freight office of the C. C. and P. Ry., at Chicago, Ill., April 20.

"'New man on desk next to mine; young, about 24. Rather decent fellow, but conceited. Do not think he will last. Took me to lunch with him this evening.'

"Now what do you think of that? The youth I described to you at such length keeps a diary, and the foregoing is culled therefrom. He left it by some mistake on top of his desk, and I picked it up innocently enough to-night, to see what it was, and that was the first thing my eye lit on. He is evidently an adept at coming to conclusions, apparently he can sum one up in two whisks of a porter's broom. I was much surprised to find myself so well done. Done on every side in those few words. I've rather enjoyed it; strikes me as being uproariously funny. Maybe his dictum is correct.

## A FOOTHOLD

You'll agree with me as to his richness. Tell every one about it and see what they will think. Tell your mother and my mother. Tell Jack and give him a chance to laugh. Tell Mayme Carter, too."

Lavinia ran at once to her mother.

"Listen," she said. And she read it.

Mrs. Blair laughed.

"How funny!" she said, "and how well he writes! I should think he'd go into literature."

Lavinia laid the letter down in her lap and looked at her mother as if she had been startled by a striking coincidence.

"Why, do you know, I've thought of that very thing myself."

"But read on," urged Mrs. Blair.

Lavinia picked up the letter again and began:

"Well, de—"

"Oh," she exclaimed, blushing hotly, "I can't read you that. Let's see—"

She leafed over the letter, one, two, three, four sheets. Mrs. Blair was smiling.

"Aren't you leaving out the best parts?" she asked archly.

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

"Oh, there's nothing," Lavinia said, not looking up. "But—oh, well, this is all. He says—

"There is a good deal of unrest and uneasiness here just now, because the first of May is coming. The road is anticipating trouble with the freight handlers; they may go out on a strike that day.'

"Oh, dear," sighed Lavinia, "more strikes, and I suppose that means more trouble for Glenn."

"Why, the strike of those men can't affect him," Mrs. Blair assured her. "He's a clerk now."

"Yes, I know, but what if he gets the notion he ought to help them by quitting too?"

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE TALK OF THE TOWN.

Macochee's common interest in Marley was sharpened by his leaving town, and out of the curiosity that raged, Lawrence and Mayme Carter one evening made a call on Lavinia.

"Well, Lavinia," said Lawrence, almost as soon as they were seated in the parlor, "what's the news about Glenn? How's he getting along?"

"Oh, pretty well," she said, smiling.

"Does he like Chicago?"

"Oh, yes; that is, fairly well."

"Run get his letters and let us read them."

"Why, Jack! The idea!" Mayme rebuked him.

But Lavinia instantly got up.

"Well, I'll read you part of one or two," she said. "He can tell you much better than I all about himself."

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

She was gone from the room a moment and then returned with two thick envelopes.

"My, Lavinia, you don't intend to read all that, do you?" Lawrence made a burlesque of looking at his watch.

"Oh, you needn't be afraid," said Lavinia, smiling. She opened a letter.

"Here's one that came several days ago. He mentions you both in this one."

"You don't mean to say he connects our names?" Lawrence affected consternation.

"Can't you be serious a moment?" Mayme said, "I want to hear what he says; do go on, Lavinia, and don't mind Jack."

Lavinia read the extract from the diary and Marley's comment.

"Doesn't he say anything about you?" said Lawrence. "Why don't you read that? You skip the most interesting parts. You'd better let me read them. Here—" and he held out his hand for the letter.

But Lavinia laid one letter securely in her lap and opened the other.

"Listen to this," she began, and then she glanced

## THE TALK OF THE TOWN

over the first page and half-way down the second.

"Here you're skipping again," cried Lawrence. "Why don't you play fair?"

"'I have made a friend,' he says," she began, "and it all came about through the strike. You know the freight handlers went out on the first of May, and since then there has been more excitement than work in the office. The freight house is stacked high with freight, and only a few men are working there and they are afraid of their lives. All around the outside of the big, long shed are policemen and detectives, and the strikers' pickets. All day they walk up and down, up and down, at a safe distance, just off the company's ground, and they waylay everybody and try to get them not to go to work here. I happened to see the strike when it began. It was day before yesterday morning. I had gone out in the freight house on some little errand and just at ten o'clock I noticed a man walk down by the platform that runs along outside the shed. I saw him stop by one of the big doors and look in. Suddenly he gave a low whistle, then another. The men in the freight

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

house stopped and looked up. Then the man outside raised his arm, and held up two fingers—'

"He wanted them to go swimming probably," interrupted Lawrence.

"Oh, Jack, do stop," said Mayme, irritably. "Right at the most interesting part, too! Do go on, Lavinia."

Lavinia read on:

"Then the man outside raised his arm, and held up two fingers, and instantly every truck in the shed dropped to the floor, bang, the men all went and put on their coats, marched out of the freight house—and the strike was on. Well, after that came the policemen and the detectives and the pickets, to say nothing of the reporters. It is about these last that I mean to tell you, for among them I have found this new friend. The other day a young man came into the office to see Clark, our boss. I was attracted by him at once. He was tall, and his smooth-shaven face was refined and thoughtful; I call him good-looking; his eyes were dark and his nose straight and full of character; his lips were thin and level; his hair was not quite black and stopped just on the right side of being

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curly. He was dressed modestly, but stylishly; I remember he wore gloves—he always does—and I thought him somewhat dudish. But what was my pleasure to see on his waistcoat the little white cross of my fraternity! I rushed up to him instantly, and gave him the grip. He was a Sig., from an Indiana college, and he is a reporter on the *Courier*. His name is James Weston; no, he is no relation to Bob Weston of Macochee at all. I asked him that the first thing; but he is some relation to the Cliffords, distant, I suppose.’”

“I wonder if that isn’t the young man who visited them summer before last?” asked Mayme. “I’ll bet it is!”

“No, it can’t be,” said Lavinia, “I thought of that the very first thing, but you see he says,” and Lavinia read on:

“‘He says he hasn’t been there for years. We chatted together for a few minutes and were friends at once. To-morrow night, if I can get off in time, I’m to dine with him at a café down-town. My, but it was good to see some one wearing that little white cross! You see my college training has done me some good after all.’”



## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

In their conversation afterward, Lavinia and Mayme celebrated Marley's abilities as a writer, but Lawrence begged Lavinia to read them more, particularly, as he assured her, those parts about herself, saying he could judge better of Marley's abilities after he heard how he treated romantic subjects.

"I want to know how he handles the love interest," he said.

"Oh, you got that from George Halliday," said Mayme. "It sounds just like him when he's discussing some book none of us has read, doesn't it, Lavinia?"

Lavinia admitted that it did sound like Halliday, and Mayme returned to her attack on Lawrence by saying:

"What do you know about writing, anyway?"

They might have gone farther along this line had not Mrs. Blair entered with a plate of cake and some ice-cream that had been left over from their dessert at supper. These refreshments instantly seemed to affect Mayme with the idea that the call had assumed the formality of a social

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function, and as she nibbled at her cake, she asked with a polite interest:

"Just what is Mr. Marley's position with the railroad, Lavinia?"

"Oh," Lavinia answered, "he has a place in the office of the freight department; he's a clerk there."

"I'm so glad to know," said Mayme, as if in relief.

"Why?" Lavinia looked up in alarm.

"Oh, well, you know—how people talk." Mayme raised her pale eyebrows significantly. Lavinia was disturbed, but Lawrence, detecting the danger, instantly turned it off in a joke.

"She heard he was a section hand," he said.

"The idea!" laughed Lavinia.

"Isn't this just the worst place for gossip you ever heard of?" said Mayme.

"The worst ever," said Lawrence. "If I were you I'd quit and start a reform movement."

When they had gone and were strolling toward the Carters', Lawrence grumbled at Mayme:

"What did you want to give it all away to Lavinia for?"

"Why, Jack, I didn't say anything, did I?"

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"Oh, no, nothing—only you tipped off the whole thing to her."

"Why, what did I say that hinted at it, even?"

"'Oh, you know how people talk!'" Lawrence mimicked her tone as he repeated her words.

"Well, you know they do, Jack, and you know all the mean things they've been saying about Glenn. And you remember Charlie Davis' mother told mama that Charlie ran across him in the street in Chicago and that—"

"Oh, Charlie Davis!" said Lawrence, as impatiently as he could say anything. "What's he? Anyway, you didn't have to tell Lavinia."

"Well, I'm glad we got the truth anyway."

"Yes, so am I."

"We must tell everybody."

"Sure," acquiesced Lawrence, "if we can get the gossips started the other way they'll have him president of the road in a few days."

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### A MAN OF LETTERS

The Macochee gossips, after they were assured he was engaged in clerical, and not manual work, might have promoted Marley much more rapidly than his railroad would have done, had it not been for the news that he had changed his employment. They had gone far enough to noise it about that Marley was chief clerk in the office, where he was only a bill clerk, when the *Republican*, with the impartial good nature with which it treated all of Macochee's folk, so long as they kept out of politics, mentioned him for the first time since his departure, and then, to tell of the advancement he was rapidly making in the metropolis that loomed so large and important in their provincial eyes. Lavinia had the facts in a letter from Marley a day or so before the

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*Republican* had them, though she never could imagine, as she told everybody, where the *Republican* got its information.

"I have a big piece of news to tell you," he wrote. "Last night I dined with Weston. It was the first really enjoyable evening I have had since I struck the town. Luckily, the strikers had everything tied up so tight that we could do little work, and I had no trouble in getting off in time. I met him about six o'clock, and we went to the swellest restaurant in town. Weston is the finest fellow you ever saw; as it was pay night, he said he would blow me off to a good dinner. And he did, the best dinner I have ever eaten; there were half a dozen courses, and as we ate we talked, talked about everything, college days, the hard days that come after college, and you, and everything. Weston's experience has been about the same as mine—one long, hopeless search for a job. He, however, did not wait so long as I did; he said that he realized there was no place for him in a small town, and so he set out for the city almost at once. His father wanted him to study medicine, but he said he hadn't the money or the patience to wait, and he

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hated medicine anyway, and, as newspaper work offered the quickest channel to making a living he chose that. His secret ambition, he confessed, is literature, and I believe he is writing a book, but he would not, or did not, tell me as much. He says he thinks newspaper work a bad business for any one to get into, but then I have discovered that that is the way every man talks about his own calling.

“After we had finished our dinner, we sat there for a long, long time over our coffee and cigarettes, and we finally got to talking about the strike. Weston, you know, has been working on it, and I was glad to be able to tell him a good many things he said he could use. Finally, I don’t know just how it came about, but I told him how the strike started with us, about the man appearing in the street alongside the freight house, whistling, and then holding up two fingers—I think I described it to you in a letter the other night. Weston was greatly interested; I can see him still, sitting across the table from me, knocking the ashes from his cigarette into his empty coffee-cup and looking so intently at me out of his brown eyes that he almost

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embarrassed me. And what was my surprise when I finished to have him say:

“By Jove, Marley, I'll have to use that. I've been wondering how to lead my story to-night.”

“Now you know the strike at our place occurred several days ago, but since then it has been spreading, and to-day the men on another road walked out. This morning when I picked up the *Courier* and turned to the strike news, here is what I read, under big head-lines:

“A short man with a brown derby hat cocked over his eye walked leisurely down Canal Street at ten o'clock yesterday morning. The short man walked a block and then turned and walked back. At the open door of the C. and A.'s big freight house he stopped. Suddenly he whistled, once, twice, thrice, in low notes. Then he raised his hand with a gesture that was graceful and yet commanding, and held up two fingers. Inside the freight house the men who were heaving away at the big bales and boxes, attracted by the whistle, paused in their labor and looked up; they saw the man raise his two fingers; and, with the discipline of well-trained troops, they dropped their trucks, put

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on their coats and marched out of the freight house. And the Alton had been added to the list of railroads whose men were on strike.'

"Of course, I was surprised and puzzled, and a little pleased too, that I had had a hand in the article. As I read it, though, I thought of a hundred details I might have told Weston, and I began to wish I had written the account myself. This afternoon he came around to the office again, and the first thing he said was:

" 'Did you see your story this morning?'

"I told him I had, of course. 'But,' I added, 'that was the way it happened on our road; not on the Alton.'

"But he only laughed, and said something about the tricks of the trade.

"And now for the news I was going to tell you. I told Weston, as we talked the story over, of my little wish that I had written the article myself, and he looked at me intently for a moment. Then he said:

" 'How'd you like to break into newspaper business?'

"My heart leaped; it came to me suddenly that



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it wasn't the law, nor railroad work, but journalism that I wanted to enter. I told him so frankly and he said:

“Well, it's a dog's life and I don't know whether I'm doing you a good turn or not, but I'll speak to the city editor tonight. He's a little short of men just now.”

“My heart is in my mouth. I can hardly wait till to-morrow, when I'm to see him again. Think of it, dear, and all it means! It means more money, association with men of my own kind, men like Weston, and a fine, interesting life; and it means you; oh, it means you!”

Marley was able in this letter to communicate to Lavinia some of his enthusiasm and some of his suspense, and she found it difficult to await the result of his next interview with Weston. She began to count the hours until Marley and Weston should meet again, and then in a flash it came over her that they had doubtless already met, that the decision was already known, the fate determined, and she was still in ignorance. She had a sense of mystery in it, and she grew impatient, wondering why he did not telegraph. The next day came, and

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a letter with it; but the letter did not decide anything. Marley wrote that Weston had spoken to the city editor, and that he had told him to bring Marley around that evening. And so, other hours of waiting, and then, at last, another letter. Marley announced the result with what self-repression he could command.

"It's settled," he wrote. "I'm to go to work Monday—as a reporter on the staff of the *Courier*. The salary to begin with is to be fifteen dollars a week. I'm glad to quit railroad work; I'm not built to be a railroad man; I can't adhere to rules as they want me to, and I can't bow down as it seems I should. I didn't tell you that my boss and I had not been getting along very well lately; I thought I wouldn't worry you. I was glad to be able to tell him to-day that I'd quit Saturday. I did it in a proud and haughty manner; he seemed surprised and shocked—even pained. And when I broke the news gently to the young Canuck he expressed great sorrow and regret, but in his secret heart I knew he was glad, for now as a prophet he can vindicate himself, at least partly, in his diary."

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Lavinia was glad that Marley had gone into newspaper work; much as she had tried she had not been able to conceive of him in exactly the ideal light as a clerk in a railroad office; that position, while it may have had its own promise, nevertheless did not envelope him in the atmosphere she considered native to him. In his new relation to literature, which, in her ignorance, she confounded with journalism, she felt a deep satisfaction, and a new pride, and she was glad when the *Republican* announced the fact of Marley's new position; she felt that it was a fitting vindication of her lover in the eyes of the people of Macochee and a rebuke for the distrust they had shown in him.

Thereafter her mail was increased, for in addition to his letter Marley sent her the *Courier* with his work marked; often he marked Weston's as well, and early in June he wrote: "I want you to read Weston's story in Sunday's paper about the Derby; it's a peach; it's the best piece of frill writing that the town has seen in many a day."

The tone of Marley's letters now became more cheerful; it was evident to Lavinia that he was finding an interest in life, and in his descriptions

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of his daily work and the places all over Chicago it took him to and the people of all sorts it brought him in contact with, she found a new interest for her own life. When he wrote that his salary had been increased because of his story about a Sunday evening service in a church of the colored people in Dearborn Street, it seemed to her that happiness at last had come to them, and if, with the passing of June, she felt a pang at Marley's grieving in one of his letters that this was the month in which they had intended to be married, she was consoled by the rapid progress he was making in his work. His salary had been raised a second time; he was receiving now twenty-five dollars a week; it seemed large to her, and she could not understand why it did not seem large to Marley, even when he wrote that Weston was paid forty dollars a week.

Her chief joy, perhaps, lay in the fact that he seemed to be living more comfortably than he had before. Now that he had left his dismal boarding-house she found a relief from its subtly communicated influence of the stranded wrecks of life, as Marley surely found it in the apartments he was sharing with Weston. She parted as gladly from

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the knowledge of his landlady as Marley did himself, assuring her that the landlady had "not decreased any in value as a zoo exhibit since first I rhapsodized about her." Lavinia felt that she could dispense with much of the worry her womanly concern for his comfort had given her, and she turned with a new joy to the books he was constantly recommending.

"Did you ever read," he wrote, "Turgenieff's *Fathers and Sons*? I know that you didn't and therefore I know what a treat you have coming. I'll send you the book if you can't get it in Macochee, and I presume you can't. Snider's sign 'Drugs and Books' is a lure to deceive an unwary public that doesn't care as much for books as it does for soda-water; and the stock there, as I recall it, consists largely of forty-cent editions of books on which the copyright has expired, and which, printed on cheap, pulp paper, are to be introduced for the first time to the natives of Macochee. I wish you could see Weston's little book-case, with its rows of his favorites. Besides Turgenieff and Tolstoi—he says the Russians are the greatest novel writers the world has yet produced—he has

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all of George Eliot; I have just read over again *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*. He likes Jane Austen, too, and he says *you* would like her; I haven't read any but *Emma* as yet. I'm going to read them all. And if you like, you can read the set of little volumes I am sending you to-day; we can read them thus together. And Henry James—do read him—*Daisy Miller* especially; you will like that. Besides these, Weston has most of Ibsen's plays, and sometimes he reads parts of them aloud to me; he reads them well. Some day, he says, he's going to write a play himself; he is fond of the theater, and we often go. One of the fine things about being on a newspaper is that we get theater tickets, though we can't always get tickets to the theater we want. Now and then the dramatic editor—a fine old fellow with a magnificent shock of white hair, who may be seen about the office late at night looking very *distingué* in his evening clothes—gets Weston to write a criticism on some play; and often the literary editor lets him review books. Weston said to-day he'd get the literary editor to let me review some books, and when I told him I didn't know how, he laughed in a

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strange way and said that wouldn't make the slightest difference. There's another book you *must* read, and that is *A Modern Instance*. The chief character is Bartley Hubbard, a newspaper man. Weston and I had a big argument about the character to-day. I said I thought it was a libel on the newspaper profession and Weston laughed and said it was only the truth, and that I'd agree with him after I'd been in the work longer. 'Newspaper work isn't a profession anyway,' he said, 'but a business.' He speaks of journalism—though he won't call it journalism, nor let me—just as lawyers speak of the law. He is urging me, by the way, to keep up my law studies, and I'm thinking of going to the law school here, if I find I can carry it on with my other work. Weston declares I can; he says a man has to carry water on both shoulders if he wants to amount to anything in the world—Wade Powell said something like that to me once. Weston says I'll want to get out of newspaper work after a while. He disturbed me a little to-day, and he hurt me, too, by saying that a newspaper man has no business to be married; and he knows all about you, too. Of course, he

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didn't mean to hurt me, it's merely his way of looking at things."

Happy as she was, Lavinia still had to have her woman's worries, and they began to express themselves in constant adjuration to Marley to guard his health; she feared the effect of night work, and she feared, too, that he could not carry on his law studies and do his duty as a reporter at the same time. She sympathized with the spirit of pride and determination which made him wish to finish his law studies and be admitted to the bar, but she found a greater satisfaction in thinking of him as a journalist than as a lawyer; the figure he thus presented to her mind was so much more romantic than the prosaic one of a lawyer to which she had been all her life accustomed; on a large metropolitan daily he was almost as romantic to her as an army officer or a naval officer would have been. And while she did not like the night work, and had her fears of it for Marley, she nevertheless felt strongly its picturesque quality.

The picture Marley drew in one of his letters of the strange shifting of the scene that is to be observed in the streets of a great city as darkness



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falls, when those that work in the prosaic day disappear and in their places appears the vast and mysterious army of the toilers by night, many of them in callings demanding the cover of the night, thrilled her strangely. But she did not know how from all the temptations of the irregular life he was leading he was saved, partly by the gentle friend he had found in James Weston, but more by the constant thought of the girl whom he had left behind at home.

## CHAPTER XXX

### HOME AGAIN

Marley, after a year or more in Chicago, found the excitement of his first return home growing upon him as he looked out the car window and long before the train entered the borders of Gordon County he eagerly began watching for familiar things.

In the spirit of holiday which had come in this his first vacation, he had felt justified in taking a chair in the parlor car, though from the associations he had formed in his newspaper work it was more difficult now for him to resist than to yield to extravagances. He had recalled with a smile how in those first hard days in the freight office he had joked about going home in a private car, and he had had all day a childish pleasure in pretending that the empty Pullman was a private

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car; he could almost realize such a distinction when he showed the conductor the pass his newspaper had got for him.

But even if he now felt glad that he was a newspaper man instead of a railroad man, he was quite willing to return to Macochee on any terms. He had tried to convince himself that he knew the very moment the train swept across the Indiana line into Ohio, and he felt a fine glow of state pride. He held his pride somewhat in check until he heard some one speak a name that he recognized as that of an Ohio town and then he boasted to the porter:

“Well, I’m back in my own state again.”

The porter, though ready to admit that Ohio was a pretty good old state, was nevertheless not very responsive, and Marley saw that he would have to enjoy his sensations all alone.

He could view with satisfaction the figure of a tolerably well-dressed city man reflected in the long mirror that swayed with the rushing of the heavy coach. He knew that his return would create a sensation in Macochee, though he was resolved to be modest about it. Even if he was not returning to Macochee in the ceremony he had dreamed of,

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he was returning in a way that was distinguished enough for him and for Macochee.

He was eager to see the old town; he tried to imagine his return in its proper order and sequence, first, the little depot, blistering in the hot sun of the August afternoon, the rails gleaming in front of it, and the air above them trembling in the heat; he could see the baggage trucks tilted up on the platform; from the eating-house came the odor of boiled ham compromised by the smell of the grease frying on the scorching cinders that were heaped about the ties; beyond was the grain-elevator that once appeared so monstrous in his eyes; across the tracks, the weed-grown field; and the only living things in sight the two men unloading agricultural machines from a box-car abandoned on a siding, the only sound, the ticking of a telegraph instrument; the target was set, but the station officials had not yet appeared.

Thence, in thought, he went up Miami Street; he saw the Court House and, lounging along the stone base of the fence, the loafers whom no one had ever seen move, but who yet must have made some sort of imperceptible astronomical progress,

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for they kept always just in the shadow of the building; then the old law office across the way; then Main Street, with its crazy signs, its awnings, and the horses hitched to the racks, then the Square with its old gabled buildings, the monument and the cavalryman, the long street leading to his own home, and at last, Ward Street, arched by its cottonwoods,—and he recalled his unfinished verses which had taken Ward Street for a subject:

“I know a place all pastoral,  
Where streams in winter flow,  
And where down from the cottonwoods  
There falls a summer snow.”

And then, at last, the old house of the Blairs' with its cool veranda, its dark bricks, its broad overhanging cornices, and Lavinia standing in the doorway!

He had never forgotten the anguish of his parting that night in spring, and he had looked forward to this return as an experience that would expiate it, and restore the lost balance of his life. But now as he thought of his life in Chicago, of the new scenes and associations, it came to him that that night after all had been final; the youth who had then gone forth had indeed gone forth never

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to return; another being was coming back in his stead. He had been successful in a way which at first flattered his pride, but a new sense of proportion had been growing in him that had lately made him mistrust newspaper work; he had for it a dislike almost as definite as that which used to displease him in Weston. He was growing tired of his life as a reporter; it had so many irregularities, so many hardships; it detached him from wholesome, every-day existence. He longed for some calling more definite, more permanent, a work in which he might do things, instead of record them in an ephemeral way. He had for a while been envious of Weston's progress in his literary efforts, and for a while he had emulated him, but he had not been long in recognizing that he lacked literary talent.

Out of this dissatisfaction with himself he had lately gone in earnestly to complete his law studies, which all along he had pursued in a desultory fashion. He found some consolation in the hope that he might be admitted to the bar in the fall, though how or when he was to get into a practice was still as much of a problem as it had been in the

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old days in Macochee. He clung steadfastly, however, to the feeling that his newspaper work was but a makeshift; Weston and he had constantly supported each other in this view—it was their one hope.

With thoughts somewhat like these Marley had been whiling away the hours of his long day's journey from Chicago to Macochee. He had read thoroughly, and with a professionally critical faculty, all the Chicago papers, and had long ago thrown them aside in a disorderly pile. Now he had the tired sense that his journey was nearing its end.

At last he saw the old mill-pond, and his heart leaped in affection; then he got his umbrella and sticks, took off his traveling cap and put it in his bag. He stood up for the porter to brush him off, and when he had selected a half-dollar as a tip, he asked the porter to get his luggage together, and in a conscious affectation he could not forego, began to pull on his new gloves. They were nearing Macochee now; and suddenly the tears started to his eyes, as in a flash he saw his white-haired father standing on the platform, anxiously craning

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his neck for a first glimpse of the boy who was coming home.

Marley's mother did not reproach him when he ate a hurried supper that evening and then set off immediately for Lavinia's. He renewed some of the emotions of the earlier days of his courtship as the familiar houses along the way gradually presented themselves to his recognition; he was glad to note the changeless aspect of a town that never now could change, at least in the way of progress, and he discovered a novel satisfaction—one of the many experiences that were so rapidly crowding in with his impressions—in the feeling that here, at least, in Macochee, things would remain as they were, and defy that inexorable law of change which makes so many tragedies in life. Lavinia must have recognized his step, for there she was, standing in the doorway, a smile on her face, and her eyelashes somehow moist. Marley felt a strange discomposure; there was a little effort, the intimacy of their letters must now give way to the intimacy of personal contact. But in another second she was in his arms, and her face was hidden against his breast.

“At last,” she said, “you're here!”



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He felt her tremble, and he held her more closely. When he released her she put her hands up to his shoulders and held him away from her, while she scanned him critically.

"You've grown broader," she said, "and heavier, and—oh, so much handsomer!"

The Blairs filed in presently, and Marley had the curious sense of this very scene having been enacted in his presence before, but it lacked the usual baffling effect of this psychological experience, for he was able to recall, in an incandescent flash of memory, that it was almost a repetition of their good-bys that night when he had gone away; Mrs. Blair was as tender, and if Connie and Chad were a little shy of his new importance, Judge Blair was as dignified, and as anxious as ever to get back to his reading. Marley felt once more that permanence of things in Maccohee; this household had remained the same, and it made him feel more than ever the change that had occurred in him.

In lovers' intense subjectivity, he and Lavinia discussed this change seriously. They reviewed their old dreams, and now they could laugh at their defeated wish to live, even in an humble way, in Maccohee.

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"It was funny, wasn't it?" said Marley. "I was very young then,—nothing, in fact, but a kid."

"Are you so very much older now?" asked Lavinia with a slight hint of teasing in her tender voice.

"Well," Marley replied, with a seriousness that impressed him, at least, as the ripe wisdom of maturity, "I am not much older in years, but I am in experience, and in knowledge of life. You see, dear, you can measure time by the calendar, but you can't measure life that way. And Weston says that there is no calling that will give a man experience so quickly as newspaper work. You know we see everything, and we get a smattering of all kinds of knowledge. Weston says that is all that reconciles him to the business; he says a man learns more there than he ever does in college. He considers the training invaluable; he says it will be of great help to him in literature, if he can ever get into literature—he isn't sure yet that he can. He can tell better after his book is published. And he says a newspaper experience will help me in the law, too, that is," Marley added, with a whimsical

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imitation of Weston's despairing uncertainty, "if I can ever get into the law."

"You think a great deal of Mr. Weston, don't you?" said Lavinia.

"He's the finest fellow in the world, and the best friend I ever had."

Marley had a curious intuition that Lavinia was a little jealous of Weston. He immediately sought to allay the feeling with this argument:

"You see, when a man does all for a fellow that Jim has done for me, and when you have lived with him, and shared your haversack with him, and he with you, like two soldier comrades, you get right down to the bottom of him. And I want you to know him, dear, I know you'll like him."

Lavinia was silent, and Marley had a fear that she might not accept Weston quite so readily.

"He has done me a world of good," he went on. "He has taught me much, he has corrected my reckoning in more ways than one. He has taught me much about books; and he has taught me to look sanely on a life that isn't, he says, always truthfully reflected in books. And besides all, if it hadn't been for him, if he had not kept me at it and

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urged me on, I think I should have been doomed for ever to remain a poor newspaper man."

"Don't you like newspaper work?" she asked with a shade of disappointment in her tone.

"I did, but I like it less every day. It's a hard and unsatisfactory life, and it has no promise in it. A man very soon reaches its highest point, and then he must be content to stay there. It's the easiest thing for a young fellow to get a start in, if he's bright; I suppose I'm making more money than any of the young lawyers in Chicago; but because it is so easy is the very reason why it is hardly worth while. Things that are easily won are not worth striving for."

"And you're going to get out of it?"

"Yes, as soon as I can. As soon as I can, I'm going to get into the law. When Weston first began urging me to keep up my studies, and when finally he made me go to the night law school, I consented chiefly because I had always felt the chagrin of defeat in having been compelled to give it up; lately, I've begun to see things differently, and I've determined to carry out my first intention and get into the law somehow. Of course,

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it's going to be hard. And one has to have a pull there as everywhere else in these days."

Marley was silent for a moment and, Lavinia thought, a little depressed. She watched him sympathetically, and yet she was a little troubled by a sense of detachment. She felt that Weston was now more closely associated with Marley's struggle than she, and she was disturbed, too, by the disappointment of finding that his struggles were not at all ended.

"Weston says," Marley went on presently, "that newspaper work is a good stepping-stone, and by it I may be able to arrange for some place in the law which will give me the start I want."

"I thought you liked your work," Lavinia said; "I thought you were happy in it."

Marley detected her regret, and was on the point of speaking, when Lavinia went on:

"I don't see why you can't go into literature as well as Mr. Weston."

Marley laughed.

"The reason is that I haven't his talent," he said.

"I don't see why," Lavinia argued with some re-

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sentment of his humility. "You haven't enough confidence in your own powers; you let Mr. Weston dominate you too much."

"Now, dearest," he pleaded, "you mustn't do Jim that injustice. He doesn't dominate me; but he is so much wiser than I, he knows so much more. You will understand when you meet him."

"Well," she tentatively admitted, "that is no reason why you shouldn't in time be a literary man as well as he. Why can't you?"

"Because I can't write, that's why."

"Why, Glenn, how can you say that? Your letters disprove that. Every one who read them said that they were remarkable, and that you should go into literature. They said you had such good descriptive powers."

Marley was looking at her in amazement.

"Why, Lavinia, you didn't show them!"

"You simpleton!" she said, with a smile in her eyes, "of course not; but I have read parts of them to mama and to your mother now and then."

"Oh, well, that's all right," sighed Marley in relief, and then he resumed his defense of Weston and his analysis of himself.

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"Of course, I suppose I can write a fairly good newspaper story; at least they say so at the office." He indulged a little look of pride, and then he went on: "But that isn't literature."

"I don't see why it isn't," she said. "I should think it would be the most natural thing in the world to go from one into the other."

"Not at all. Literature requires style, personality, distinction, and the artistic temperament."

"I'd say you were talking now like George Halliday if I didn't know you were talking like Mr. Weston."

"I wish you could hear Weston talk about literature," he said. "He'd convince you."

"He couldn't convince me that he can write any better than you can." Lavinia compressed her lips in a defiant loyalty.

Marley paused to kiss the lips for their loyalty, and he compromised the validity of his own argument by saying:

"As a matter of fact, the law, in America and in England, has given more men to literature than journalism ever has."

## HOME AGAIN.

"Then maybe you can enter literature through the law," said Lavinia, seizing her advantage.

"No," said Marley, shaking his head. "I'm not cut out for it, as Weston is. Some day he will be a great man, and we shall be proud to have known him so intimately. And we will have him at our home; I have many a dream about that."

He looked fondly at her, and her eyes brightened.

"And there is another reason why I want to get out of newspaper work," he went on, speaking tenderly, "and that is because everybody says a newspaper man has no more right to be married than a soldier has."

"But they all are," said Lavinia.

"Yes, they all are, or most of them."

"And I suppose it is the married ones who say that."

"Well, I know one who is going to be married just as soon as he can."

"Who is that,—Mr. Weston?"

"No, but Mr. Weston knows him, and knows his intentions, and he has promised to be at the wedding and act as best man."



## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

"Oh, it would be fine to have a literary man at the wedding, wouldn't it?"

They talked then about the wedding, and they found all their old delicious joy in it. Marley said it must be soon now, though with a pang that laid a weight on his heart, he wondered, as he thought of all the extravagances he had allowed himself to drift into, where he was to get the money. He could reassure himself only by telling himself that he was going to live as an anchorite when he got back to Chicago; even if he had to give up the pleasant apartment with Weston and go back to the boarding-house in Ohio Street.

"How shall you like living in Chicago?" he asked. "Can you be happy in a little flat, without knowing anybody, and without being anybody?"

"I shall be happy anywhere with you, Glenn!" she said, looking confidently into his eyes.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### ILLUSIONS AND DISILLUSIONS

It was a pleasure to Marley to accept the homage the people paid him; they confounded his success in journalism with a success in literature, and under the impression that all writers are somehow witty, they laughed extravagantly at his lightest observation.

But much as Marley relished all this, much as he enjoyed being at home again, with Lavinia and with his father and mother, he was disturbed by a certain restlessness that came over him after he had been in Macochee a few days and the novelty and excitement of his return had worn off. The glamour the town had worn for him had left it; it seemed to have withered and shrunk away. He could no longer, by any effort of the imagination, realize it as the place he had carried affectionately

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

in his heart during the long months of his absence; its interests were so few and so petty, and he found himself battling with a wish to get away. He was fearful of this feeling; he did not dare to own it to himself, much less to his father and mother or to Lavinia.

He was glad that Lavinia would not let him mention going back to Chicago, and as the days swept by with the swiftness of vacation time, he was troubled that he did not feel more acutely the sorrow he felt would best become the prospect of another separation. He was comforted, finally, when he was able to analyze his sensations sufficiently to discover that it was neither his sweetheart nor his parents that had changed, but his own attitude toward life in a small town; he was vastly relieved when he succeeded in separating his feelings and saw that it was Macochee alone that he had lost his affection for, though he could not analyze his sensations deeply enough to recognize himself as at that period of life when external conditions are accepted for more than their real value; he was still too young for that. And so he could spend his days happily with Lavinia and

## ILLUSIONS AND DISILLUSIONS

grudge the moments which Lawrence and Mayme Carter filched from them by their calls, and he was as resentful of Mayme's invitation to the supper which she exalted into a dinner with a reception afterward, as was Lavinia herself.

When Marley went to pay his call on Wade Powell, he found many sensations as he glanced about the dingy little office where he had begun his studies. Wade Powell himself, smoking and reading his Cincinnati paper, was sitting at his old desk, with the same aspect of permanence he had always given the impression of. Marley rushed in on him with a face red and smiling and when Powell looked up, he threw down his paper, and leaped to his feet, saying:

"Well, I'll be damned!"

But when their first greetings were over, Powell's manner changed; he began to show Marley a certain respect, and he paid him the delicate tribute of letting him do most of the talking, whereas he used to do most of the talking himself. He was not prepared to hear that Marley was still studying law; and it cost him an effort to readjust his conception of Marley as a successful journalist to the

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

old one of a struggling student. He gave Marley, some intelligence of this, and of his disappointment when he said with a meekness Marley did not like to see in him :

“Well, of course, you know your own business best.”

But when Marley had taken pains to explain his position and when he had described the Chicago law offices, Powell grew more reconciled.

“I’ve watched you,” he said, “I’ve watched you, and I’ve asked your father about you every time I’ve seen him; my one regret was that you were not working on a Cincinnati paper; then I could have read what you were writing. I did try to get a Chicago paper—but you know what this town is.”

Powell was deeply interested in Marley’s description of his old friend, Judge Johnson, and as Marley gave him some notion of the judge’s importance and prosperity Powell could only exclaim from time to time :

“Well, I’ll be damned !”

Marley did not tell Powell that Judge Johnson had appeared to have forgotten him; he felt that it would be more handsome to accept the moral re-

## ILLUSIONS AND DISILLUSIONS

sponsibility of a prevarication than to hurt Powell's feelings in the way he knew the truth would hurt them. Even as it was, Judge Johnson's success, now so keenly realized by Powell when it had been brought home to him in this personal way, seemed to subdue him, and he was only lifted out of his gloom when Marley said:

"But I'll tell you one thing, there isn't a lawyer in Chicago who can try a case with you."

Powell's eye brightened and his face glowed a deeper red; then the look died away as he said:

"Well, I made a mistake. I ought to have gone there."

"Is it too late?"

Powell thought a moment, and Marley regretted having tempted him with an impossibility. He was relieved when Powell shook his head and said:

"Yes, it's too late now."

Powell, with something of the pathos of age and failure that was stealing gradually over him, begged Marley to come in and see him every day while he was at home.

"You see I've always kept your desk," he said, in a tone that apologized for a weakness he per-

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

haps thought unmanly, "just as it was when you went away."

Marley thought cynically that Powell had kept everything else just as it was when he went away, but he was instantly ashamed of the thought, and ashamed, too, of the fact that he and Lavinia both considered even this little morning call a waste of time, and a sacrifice almost too great to be borne.

Powell went with Marley out into the street, and it gave him evident pride to walk by his side down Main Street and around the Square.

"I want them all to see you," he said frankly.

He made Marley go with him to the McBriar House and then to Con's Corner, and, in every place where men stopped him and shook Marley's hand and asked him how he was getting along, Powell took the responsibility of replying promptly:

"Look at him; how does he seem to be getting along?"

Powell found a delight that must have been keener than Marley's in Marley's fidelity to Chicago, expressed quite in the boastful frankness of the citizens of that city when abroad, though to

## ILLUSIONS AND DISILLUSIONS

Marley it seemed that he was putting it on them by doing so. He found them all, however, in a spirit of loyalty to Macochee that might easily have become combative.

“Well, little old Macochee’s good enough for us, eh, Wade?” they would say.

Marley would not let them be ahead of him in praise of Macochee, and Powell himself softened enough to admit that old Ohio was a pretty good place to have come from.

When they suddenly encountered Carman in the street, Marley flushed with confusion, first for himself and then vicariously for Powell. But there was no escape from a situation that no doubt exaggerated itself to his sensitiveness, and he was soon allowing Carman to hold his hand in his right palm while with the other Carman solicitously held Marley’s left elbow, and transfixed him with that left eye which still refused to react to light and shade.

“Well, how are you?” asked Carman. “How are you, anyway?”

“Oh, I’m all right.”



## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

"Guess you're glad now I didn't give you that job, eh?"

Marley could not look at Powell, but he hastened to say:

"Yes, I'm glad, now."

"Maybe it was for the best," said Carman.

When they had left him Marley quickly and crudely tried to change the subject, but Powell insisted on saying:

"I want you to know that I've always felt like a dog over that."

"Oh, don't mention it," Marley begged. "I was honest when I told Carman I was glad it turned out as it did."

"Yes," said Powell, "I guess it was all for the best."

To Marley's relief they dropped the matter then, and went over to Con's Corner. There Powell lighted a cigar, and Marley could not resist asking for a brand of cigarettes, the kind that Weston smoked, though he knew that Con would not have them. He felt mean about it afterward, but he could not forego some of the petty distinctions of living in a city and he indulged a little revenge

## ILLUSIONS AND DISILLUSIONS

toward the people who had deserted him in what had seemed to him his need, and now, in what seemed to them his prosperity, were so ready to rally to him. Marley went home at noon feeling that his triumph had been almost as great as if he had come home in a private car.

His triumph soon was at an end; they came to the afternoon of the day when Marley was to return to Chicago. It was a golden day, with a sun shining out of a sky without clouds, and yet a delicious breeze blew out of the little hills. Marley and Lavinia walked out the white and dusty pike that made the road to Mingo. They walked slowly along the edge of the road, in silence, under the sadness of the parting that was before them. They longed ineffably that the moments might be stayed; somehow they felt they might be stayed by their silence.

But when they had ascended the hill and stood beside the old oak-tree which grew by the road, they looked out across the valley of the Mad River, miles and miles away—across fields now golden with the wheat, or green with the rustling corn that glinted in the sun, off and away to the trees

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

that became vague and dim in the hazy distance. Back whence they had come lay Maccohee; they could see the tower of the Court House, the red spire of the Methodist church, the gleam of the sun on some great window in the roof of the car-shops; on the other side of town crawled a train, trailing its smoke behind it. Marley looked at Lavinia—she was leaning against the tree, and as he looked he saw that her blue eyes were filling slowly with tears.

“Isn’t it beautiful!” he said, looking away from her to the simple scenery of Ohio.

“Do you remember that day?”

“When we picked out our farm—where was it?”

“Wasn’t it over there?”

“Yes,” he said. “We could come and live here when we are old.” He knew he was but seeking to console himself for what now could not be. “And there is the old town,” he said. “It looks beautiful from here, nestling among those trees, it seems peaceful, and calm, and simple. But it is different when you are in it; for there are gossip and envy and spite, and I can never quite forgive it because it had no place for me. Well,” he went

## ILLUSIONS AND DISILLUSIONS

on defiantly, in the relief he had been able to make for himself out of his immature reading of Macochee's character; "I don't need it any more; it is little and narrow and provincial, and the real life is to be lived out in the larger world. It's a hard fight, but it's worth it."

"Don't you regret leaving it?" asked Lavinia, in a voice that was tenderer than Marley had ever known it. Marley looked at Macochee and then he looked at her.

"I regret leaving it, dear heart, because I must leave you behind in it."

"Would you never care to come back if it were not for me?" she asked.

"I might," he admitted, "when we are old. We could come back here then and settle down on our farm over there." He pointed.

"I'm half-afraid of the city," Lavinia said.

He turned and took her in his arms.

"Dearest," he said, "you must not say that; for the next time I come it will be to take you away from Macochee."

"Will it?" she whispered.

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

"Yes; and it can't be long now. How we have had to wait!"

"Yes," she repeated, "how we have had to wait!"

## CHAPTER XXXII

### AT LAST

Marley, in that compensatory pleasure we find in difficulties in the retrospect, was afterward fond of saying that if he had waited until he had the money and the position to warrant his marrying, he never would have married at all.

Just what moved him to take the decisive step he did he would have found it hard to tell. He had grown accustomed to the life he was living in Chicago, he had succumbed, as it were, to his environment; he no longer regretted Macochee and he found a satisfaction in declaring, whenever he had the chance, that the kindest thing the town had ever done for him was to refuse him a place within its borders. As he looked back at all the plans he had formed, he marveled at their number, but he

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

marveled more that he should have had such regret in the failure of all of them; he was glad now that they had failed; had any one of them succeeded his life would have been diverted into other channels, and it gave him a kind of fear when he tried to imagine his life in those other channels; he could see himself in those relations only as some other identity, and it gave him a gruesome feeling to do this.

Not that he was satisfied with himself or his surroundings; he did not like newspaper work, and he did not like Chicago very well. He was determined to get out of newspaper work at any rate, and while he could not yet clearly see a way of getting into the law, he had a calm assurance that he would do it, in the end. Weston sustained him in this hope by saying:

“A man can't control circumstances; they control him; but sometimes he can dodge them, and, after all, every sincere prayer is answered.”

During the winter that followed the summer when he had paid his visit to his home he worked hard at the law, spending in study the hours the other men on his newspaper spent in their dissi-

## AT LAST.

pations, and in the spring he stole away almost secretly to Springfield, took the examination, and was admitted to the bar.

After it was done, it seemed but a little thing; he wrote Lavinia and he wrote Wade Powell, knowing the interest Powell would have in the fact, that he felt no different now as a lawyer than he had when he was merely a layman. Weston had spent the winter over the book he was writing; in the spring he found a publisher, and *The Clutch of Circumstance* was given to the world. Marley thought it a wonderful book, and so did Lavinia, and while it made but little noise in the world, Weston said it had done better than he expected—so well, in fact, that he was going to give up newspaper work, and give his attention wholly to writing another book.

It was a shock to Marley when Weston told him they would have to give up their apartment; it was a break in the life to which he had grown accustomed. But it seemed a time of change, and it was then he wrote Lavinia that he thought it useless for them to wait any longer; he thought they might as well be married then as at any time.



## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

Unconsciously, perhaps, he wrote this letter as if he and not she had been waiting, and if he had known the state of the sensitive public opinion in Macochee, he might have felt himself justified in the attitude. Ever since his visit there the summer before his apparent prosperity had given the sentiment of the town an impetus in his favor; the people had turned their criticism toward Lavinia; for months it was a common expression that it was a shame she was keeping Marley waiting so long. They would nod in a sinister way, and insinuate the worldliest of motives; it was generally understood that she was waiting for Marley to make a fortune, and this, they held, was demanding too much. She had withdrawn utterly from the society of Macochee; and she had not gone to one of the balls Lawrence had arranged that winter at the Odd Fellows' Hall; her position, outwardly at least, was as isolated as that of the Misses Cramer, the fragile and transparent old maids who lived so many years in their house sheltered by the row of cedars behind the High School grounds.

When Judge Blair received the formal letter in which Marley told him he had asked Lavinia to

## AT LAST

name the day and requested his approval, the judge gave his consent with a promptness that surprised him almost as much as it did Mrs. Blair and Lavinia. He justified his inconsistency to his wife, in order perhaps, the more thoroughly to justify it to himself, by saying that he had long felt Lavinia's position keenly.

"If the strain has been to her anything like what it has been to me," he said to his wife, "they could not have endured it much longer."

"It will be lonely here without her," said Mrs. Blair, pensively.

"Yes," the judge assented, and then after a moment's thought he added:

"But we can now begin to worry about Connie."

"Don't you dare mention that, William!" said Mrs. Blair, almost viciously. "She mustn't begin to think of such a thing."

"But she's in long dresses now, and she seems to walk home more and more slowly every night with those boys from the High School."

"Well, I don't propose to go through such an experience as we have had for these last three years, not right away, at any rate."

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

The judge tried to laugh, as he said :

“Well, I’ll turn Connie over to you ; I’m going to have a little peace now.”

The judge complained that he could find no peace, however, anywhere, so great was the preparation that raged thereafter in the house, driving him with his book and cigar from place to place: Mrs. Blair and Lavinia and Connie were in fine excitement over the gowns that were being fashioned, and Miss Ryan lived at the Blairs’ for weeks, while in every room there were billowy clouds of white garments, and threads and ravelings over all the floors.

Meanwhile it was understood that Marley, too, was making arrangements in Chicago. He had leased a small flat on the South Side, and had arranged with Weston to remove most of the furniture of their apartment into the new home where the lovers were to set up housekeeping. Mrs. Marley was to spare them some of the things from her home, and Mrs. Blair, from time to time, designated certain articles which she was willing to devote to the cause. Chad’s contribution was merely

## AT LAST

a suggestion; he said they could depend on the wedding presents to fill up the gaps.

They were married in the middle of June. The ceremony was pronounced by Doctor Marley in the parlor of the Blair home; everybody bore up well until, under the stress of his emotion, the doctor's voice broke, and then Mrs. Blair wept and the judge wiped his eyes and his reddened, anguished face. Mrs. Marley cried too, though every one tried to comfort her with the assurance that she was not losing a son, but gaining a daughter. Connie, in her first long gown, acted as maid for her sister, but it was evident that she was desperately impressed by the young author of *The Clutch of Circumstance*, who had come on from Chicago to act as groomsman.

The company that had been invited was as much impressed by Weston as Connie was; they had never had an author in Macochee before, and though most of them had such confused notions of Weston's performances in literature that they grew cold with fear when they talked with him, they nevertheless braved it out for the sake of an experience they could boast of afterward. Most

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

of them took refuge in a discussion of Marley's achievements with him, and they gave him the unflattering impression that Marley's work was as important as his own.

Many of them had plots they wished him to use in his stories, others wished to know if he took his characters from real life; and Mrs. Carter was of such an acuteness that she identified Marley as his hero, though Weston had tried to keep his book from having any hero. George Halliday, however, was able to save the day; he could discriminate; he had read *The Clutch of Circumstance*, having borrowed Lavinia's autograph copy, and he told Weston that while he did not go in for realism, because it was too photographic, too materialistic and lacked personality, he nevertheless had enjoyed a pleasant half-hour with the volume, and considered it not half-bad.

This conversation was held in plain hearing of all in that difficult moment after the ceremony, when the relatives of the bride had solemnly kissed her, and her most intimate friends, like Mayme Carter, had wept on her neck. The people were standing helplessly about; Marley noticed Wade

## AT LAST

Powell, as dignified as a clergyman, in his black garments and white tie standing apart with his wife.

Marley had never seen Mrs. Powell before, but he recalled in a flash that she filled his conception of her; and this delicate, sensitive little face completed the picture he remembered long ago to have formed. When he saw Powell standing there, his hands behind him, unequal to the ordeal of being entertained in Judge Blair's house, bowing stiffly and forcing a smile on the few occasions when he was spoken to or thought he was being spoken to, he had a wish to go to him, but he could not then leave his place by Lavinia's side. He was glad a moment later when he saw his father and Wade Powell in conversation, and as he and Lavinia passed them on their way out to the dining-room he heard his father say:

"Well, I'll tell you, Mr. Powell, when I was young my creed was founded on the fact of sin in man; but now that I am old, I find it more and more founded on the fact of the good that is in all of them."

When the supper was over, Lawrence gave the

## THE HAPPY AVERAGE

cheer that every one wished to see come to the wedding by clearing the parlor for a dance, and Marley was glad that his position now permitted him to refrain from dancing with a valid excuse.

Marley thought that Lavinia never looked so pretty as she did when she stood at the head of the stairs after she had donned her blue traveling gown, drawing on her gloves and waiting for the carriage that was to drive them to the station. Her face was rosy in the light that filled the house, and she met his eyes with a fond, contented glance.

"Are you happy?" he asked.

"Don't you see?" she said, looking up at him.

"And will you be happy in that big city, away from every one you know, as the wife of a newspaper man?"

"I shall be happy anywhere with you."

"Our dreams are coming true," Marley said, "after a fashion. And yet not just as we dreamed them, after all."

"In all the essentials they are, aren't they?"

"Yes, but you know our dream was that I was to practise law."

"Well, we still have that dream."

**AT LAST**

**“Yes, we still have it; maybe it will come true. Weston says that our dreams are as much realities in our lives as anything else.”**

**THE END.**







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